

A N ⁰⁹
A N S W E R

To some late PAPERS, entitled,
The Independent Whig;

So far as they relate to the
Church of *ENGLAND*,
As by Law Established.

In which,
Her DOCTRINES, CREEDS, LITUR-
GY, and ESTABLISHMENT; her CLER-
GY, with their *Rights*, Divine and Humane,
are modestly defended; and their Author's new
Notions prov'd to be, not only Absurd and
Ridiculous, but also directly Opposite to those
very *Texts* of GOD'S *Word*, on which he pre-
tends to found them.

By *FRANCIS SQUIRE*, A. M.
Rector of *Exford*, and Vicar of *Cutcombe* and
Luxborow, *Somerset*. K

L O N D O N :

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ANSWER

The following is a list of the

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TO THE
Most Reverend Father in GOD,
WILLIAM,
By Divine Providence,
Lord ARCH-BISHOP of
Canterbury,
Metropolitan, and Primate of
all *ENGLAND.*

May it please your Grace,



HE honest Design, and
the common Concern of
the following Papers,
give them some Pretence to

your Lordship's Protection. You have been raised up, not only *over* us, but *for* us; and the same Hand that has committed us to your Government, has intitled us to your Tuition.

I do not bespeak so powerful a Patronage by Reason of any Diffidence in my Cause, or out of any great Apprehensions from my particular Adversary; but it is the Number of Gain-sayers that makes them formidable. We are outrageously attacked both within, and from without, by open Enemies; and false Brethren; with Pretext of Scripture, and in Defiance of it; and Parties in themselves most widely different, Papist and Puritan, Atheist and Fanatick,

natick, Anabaptist, Arian, and Independent Whig, do all unite in the Prejudice of Christianity, and join their Interests for the Overthrow of the Church established in this Kingdom.

These Considerations, my Lord, are melancholy and full of Terror, but we have a good God——! These Reflections would make us tremble for our *Faith*, lest it should be lost, or removed from us; but 'tis founded on a Rock, 'tis built upon the Apostles; and the divine Providence has made *you* our Leader (under Christ and his Majesty) in the Defence of it. It has always been the Property of *infinite Wisdom*, to create

Instruments proportionable to the *Work*, for which the Folly or Wickedness of his Creatures has given Occasion.

With what Faith and Honour your Grace has discharged the mighty *Trust*; how bravely you have withstood the *Mystery* of Iniquity; with what Firmness and Constancy you have blasted the *Contrivances* of Heresy and Infidelity; the *next Age* may boldly utter. I shall only pray, that the Almighty will be pleased to give a farther Blessing to your pious Labours, and that he will continue your Health and Vigour in that eminent *Station*, to which he has exalted you, 'till *Englishmen* shall

(vii)

shall be sensible of their Interest and their Duty. *I am,*

*May it please your Grace,
with all Veneration,*

your Grace's

most dutiful Son

and Servant,

FRANCIS SQUIRE.



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shall be sensible of their In-
terest and their Duty. I am,

May it please your Grace,

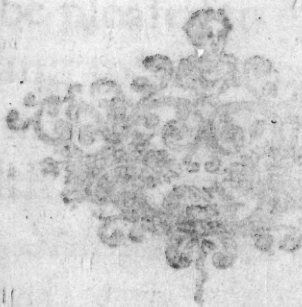
with all Veneration,

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THE
PREFACE.

Courteous Reader,



YOU may be probably told, that the Papers you now hold in your Hand, were written by a Whig. I confess, I once had an high Esteem for the Party so called, and looked upon them as the best Englishmen; the firmest Friends, and the surest Support both of Church and State.

And so they may be still, if one could tell where to find 'em.——For Truth is still the same; and it must be the same Principles that must at last save us, tho' perhaps in Hands where heretofore they were little expected. A Passion for just Liberty, a Fondness for our Establishment and Constitution, a Love to our native Country, a Spirit of Charity and

and Moderation, and a Zeal for the Christian Protestant Interest, are Foundations in themselves unchangeable; they are Principles on which the Happiness of this Nation intirely depends; they are Maxims that will never be totally rejected, whilst we have any thing left, but as naturally taken up by Men out of Power, as they are forgotten in it. So that in short, to be a true Whig, is generally speaking, to be of the weakest Side—For which Reason, I hope I may still (without Envy) pretend to that Character.

But is it not Pity that Prosperity should always make Men wanton? Is it not hard that the Possession of Power should immediately alter our Notions of it? And is it not yet stranger, that those who have worthily advanced themselves by the honest Principles of Moderation, should afterwards give in to the dangerous Measures of the Furious and Violent; should Sacrifice their Honour and their Interest, to those Passions by which their Predecessors have fallen before their Faces;

Faces; should run from a small Danger on one Side of the Boat, to overset it on the other?

But this is the Course of things! Dum vitant stulti vitia, &c. Have we not beheld a Party in the Zenith of their Grandeur, out of a religious Solitude to avoid Fanaticism, madly give up themselves to the Management of Papists and Jacobites? And are there not thousands of such wise Heads to be seen at this Day, who from a just Dread of Priest-craft, and Spiritual Tyranny, have plunged themselves into Irreligion and Prophaneness; and for fear of an implicit Faith in the Church, have assigned over their Senses and their Souls, to those who are in truth a Disgrace to any Party, and will surely ruin it?

If the Maxims, on which the Protestant Succession was first introduced, were pursued in its Defence, we might defy our Enemies, and disband our Armies! But such Fools are honest Men, as to lose that by Flattery, which they had saved from Violence; to suffer those
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who had the least Share of the Combat to lay Claim to all the Glory; and to commit the Custody of their Consciences to such, as have not Religion enough to make them trust-worthy for forty Shillings.

The Settlement of the Crown, the Security of our Constitution, and a generous Toleration, are the Works of Men, whose noble Views were the Honour of God, the Good of Souls, and the Prosperity of England. Yet so it comes to pass, that these very Persons, (whether scared out of their Wits by past Danger, or infatuated by Success) have fallen into Extravagancies as great as they escaped; have prostituted their Honour and their Liberty to Men who do Good but by Accident, and to whom every thing is lawful; and slavishly drink down their Notions and Dictates, who have no settled Principle of their own Actions; whose Thirst after Liberty is but an Hatred of Power in any but themselves; and whose Zeal for Toleration consists but in Infidelity and Envy at Establish-
ments,

ments. Such pretend to be Whigs—! This puts me in Mind of a bold Ruffian whose Trade a long while was robbing of Churches, and who had several times very narrowly escaped in such magnificent Enterprises. This fortunate Hero happening to survive 'till the Days of Reformation, and seeing the People mighty successful in spoiling Churches, melting down Crucifixes, and carrying off the rest of the Consecrated Trinkets; he comes up to them with a brazen Face, and gravely harangues them, That for his Part he had been always an Enemy to these Fragments of Popery; that he had made it the Business of his whole Life to remove these antique Occasions of Superstition, that he had been a great Labourer and Sufferer too in that good Cause, and that righteous Work, in which they were so successfully ingaged; and in Conclusion offer'd, (if they would make him their General) to do his best for them; and promised to carry the blessed Reformation to a higher Perfection, than they

they (*who were but Novices in the Trade*) were able to do.

But on what Grounds can our modern Reformers, or Church-Demolishers, expect the Vassalage and Adoration of the People? Every body knows that at a time of Need there's not a Man of them to be heard of; and, as full as they pretend to be with the Spirit of Truth and Liberty, I have always observed that it never moves them to appear in Publick, when there is the least Danger going. They often indeed pretend a great Friendship to Right and Property, but to those who can see the Consequences of things, they appear most evidently sapping the Foundations of both. We know they can make long and florid Declamations against Arbitrary Power, Popery, and Priestcraft; but 'tis equal to a Demonstration, that they go the surest (if not the nearest) Ways to introduce them all three.

*A Contempt of the Clergy (which is the daily Labour of these worthy Patriots) never fails to bring forth a Contempt of
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their Admonitions, and therewith a Contempt of the Gospel: It this Day appears but too plainly how many enormous Vices and Corruptions are the necessary Product of Irreligion and Infidelity; and such abominable Immoralities have never yet failed of ending in Slavery, Persecution, and Barbarism. Whoever vilifies and discredits Religion, (pretend what he will) is ruining his Country: He pulls up the only sure Fences of a regular and free Government, and obliges the Magistrate (whether he will or no) to Rule the prophane and degenerate Crew by a high Hand, and by standing Armies. A People once taught to disregard the Creator and his Judgments, become Rebels of Course: They naturally dissolve into a State of War, Confusion, and Anarchy; and from thence soon become an easy Prey to the first Invader, either to some crafty domestick Upstart, or to some foreign Tyrant. Whatever he be, he will not fail to govern them by the same bloody Politicks by which he subdued them: Soon will

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he learn this State-Maxim, that (as Men cannot be good Subjects without some Religion, so) there is no effectual Way to enslave them, but by imposing on them the Religion of their Master: And whether that Religion will not be Popery, whether that Force and Imposition will not soon conclude in Priestcraft and Ignorance, we might do well to consider. This has been the Effect of all Revolutions, and all Conquests, to which the unhappy Way has been paved by Atheistical Opinions, and Dissolution of Manners! — But what Application we should wisely make of these Observations; what Thanks we owe on this Account to our present Blasphemers, and Revilers of Establishments; whether we shall still go on to treat the Adversaries of our Faith, as Friends to our Government; whether bad Churchmen can be good Patriots; whether Men may be Protestants, and yet not Christians, are Questions of some Moment, and such as may seem at this time to deserve a serious Debate among true Englishmen, and Lovers of their Country.



A N
A N S W E R
TO THE
Independent Whig, &c.

S I R,



COULD be sorry it is my Lot to enter the Lifts with one whose very Title is formidable; but I have a good Cause. I waited long, after the first Perusal of your Book, in hopes one or other more equal to the Task would think it worth their while to remark upon it; but my Conscience tells me, what is every one's Concern, is every one's Reproach till it be undertaken. I therefore come forth, like the Son of Jesse, in Confidence of Protection from those *Truths* which you have *defied*; and with this particular Pleasure, that as the Gentleman, with whom I contend, has concealed his Name from me and from the World; the Reflections I shall make, cannot reasonably involve me in any personal Resentments—Not that any Considerations of that kind could disengage me from my Duty to God and my Country; or that my Design is to use any

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Asperity

Asperity that is inconsistent with Charity, or good Manners; but *Respect of Persons* might soften my Argument, and incline me to pursue it with less Force or Freedom.

I have this Advantage, that my Adversary holds a Shield for my Defence; I may demand Protection from your own avowed *Principles of full Toleration and Liberty of the Press*; and whoever is the Author of the *Independent Whig*, he is certainly too much a Gentleman to grudge or deny me that *Freedom* with him; which he takes himself with the *Establisments* of his Country, and the Gospel of Christ. Whatever I shall say, shall be the Product of Sincerity, and maintained no longer than I believe it to be true; the Difference betwixt us cannot in the least abate my good Wishes for your Welfare, or my Admiration of your Abilities: My Concern is, that so surprizing a Genius should so grossly mistake *Truth* for *Falshood*, or be able to render the one so much like the other.

I never felt the Power of Eloquence, or the Violence of Words artfully chosen, in any Person equal to your self. Something there is so enchanting in your *Wit*; so peculiar is your Art to move, to affect, to captivate every Passion, you have Occasion to apply to; that your Harangues are swallowed by the gaping Multitude instead of Arguments; your bare Intimations pass for Maxims; and whilst we stare, and feed our Fancies with the gay Trappings in which your Propositions are cloathed, we forget to demand the Proof of them.

And were it not an Affair of the last Importance, I should not have laboured to rob your Friends of these pleasing Astonishments. Had you diverted the Age with any Subject less than *Religion*, I had never ventured to interrupt your Flights; had not the Blessings of Earth, and the Joys of Heaven, been both at Stake; I had never presumed to contradict

tradict a Writer, whose bare *Authority* is almost an Answer to any thing I can argue.

For this Reason I shall oppose your Sentiments no farther, than where they seem to me openly to oppose the naked Truth; and this Opposition shall be in such plain and naked Terms, without Colour or Artifice; that you shall be well satisfied my Design is not to challenge you at any *other Weapons*; and that where I am against you, it is only because I cannot be with you.

The Stripes you so liberally deal to *Papists*, *Jacobites*, and *High-Flyers*, let themselves return when they have an Opportunity: As I was never so much as suspected to be concern'd in any of those Parties, I shall not engage in the Defence of any Principle that is peculiarly theirs.

But is it absolutely necessary, that we must have a *Popish Church*, or no Church at all? If it be allow'd, that strictly speaking there is no *Priest* or *Sacrificer* under the Gospel-Covenant; does it therefore follow, that there is no *Ministry* or *Clergy* of *God's Appointment*? If it be never so well proved, that no Man is *infallible*, or invested with Authority to force his own Faith on the Consciences of his Brethren; is it thence to be inferr'd, that all *Creeds* are *Priestcraft*, *Imposture*, and *Persecution*?

The *Religion* of our Country, the *Articles* of our *Creeds*, the *Doctrines* of the *Gospel*, the *Privileges* of *Faith*, and the *Rights* of those who are *ordained* by God and Man to preach it, are Things of Moment, not to be given up at the first Attack; and I hope they may be *defended* with as good a Grace as they are *contemned* and *ridiculed*. This then is the Work I have now upon my Hands; and whatever Advantage the Looseness of your Guard, or the Strength of my Cause shall give me over you, I promise to treat you with at least as much Civility

lity and Decency as you have done the first Man of the Kingdom (after the Royal Family,) and (as you call him with a Jest, but a very *true* one) the *Brightest Luminary of our Church*.

For the Preservation therefore of his Majesty's *Peace*, I will leave you the greatest Part of your Book entire and unmolested: I mean all those numerous Pages and Chapters, that consist meerly in Ridicule, Satire, and Slander. As this sort of Trash has not the least Air of Argument in it, so I know no Arguments that can be used against it; unless such as are used by eloquent Females.

But there is something peculiar in your way of *Scolding*; and that is (like a Pedant) to lash with the Verb *Amo* in your Mouth; to make Sneer, Satire, and Calumny look like Cordial Advice, Friendship, or Argument; so to point the Weapon, that it may cut farther than it reaches, and (like *King Arthur's Sword*) kill with the very Shadow; to come to us with a *Hail* and with a *Kiss*, at the same time you are plotting our Destruction; to sound the Charge against *Papists* and *Nonjurors*; but so to describe them that every one who wears a *Gown* shall be taken for an Enemy.

Can any one desire to be accosted in softer, or fairer Language, than you are pleased to give us in your Second Paper? "No Man desires to pay
"a more true and affectionate Esteem and Re-
"verence than my self to those Clergymen who an-
"swer this (the aforesaid) End of their Institution,
"and whose Lives and Manners (*Oh! pious Soul!*)
"grace and adorn their Profession and Doctrine.

This Protestation is mighty good, kind, and generous; and doubtless those who have the Benefit of it will not fail to thank you! In the mean time I confess I am not able to discern for whose *Use* it was made, but the Author's.

Yours

You may probably find an Occasion to make your Retreat under it; but I am sure no Clergyman of the Church of *England* can trust to its Protection. For how soon afterwards do you alter your Style, and proclaim aloud against the *Rights and Being* of the whole Order? How positively do you assert, that there is no such Office or Employment *instituted in the New Testament*; and that the *Distinction of Ecclesiastical and Civil* is Roguery and Priestcraft? How absurdly do you contend, throughout the whole Volume, that the Clergy are a Pack of artful *Knaves*, and yet ignorant *Fools*; that they are Sophisters, and yet Blockheads; Clowns, and yet Courtiers; Atheists, and yet Bigots; constant Devisers of new Doctrines, and yet furious Sticklers for old Traditions, and Impositions; that they are the most cunning, stupid; crafty, senseless; popular, selfish, Tribe in the Universe: That they ever strove to *overturn Religion*; that they ever did oppress when they could get an Opportunity; that they have perpetually fill'd the World with Lies and Forgeries, with Rapine and Violence, with Blood and Slaughter: That, besides all this, they are at best the *useleffest* Creatures in the World; the most *unqualify'd* of all Men to expound the Gospel and teach the People; and utterly *unlikely* either to discover Truth, or to impart it: That moreover, the World has not the least *Occasion* for them; that the Religion of Christ has no Business with them; that its *Sacraments* may be administred by Cook-Maids or Oyster-Wenches; its Doctrines explained by Colliers or Bargemen; and that its Article of Faith and Precepts of Practice may be understood by the *meanest Vulgar*; by any one who has but Sense enough to number them on his three Fingers?

These hopeful Assertions (I say) are *yours*; you know them to be so either in Words, or by una-

voidable Construction; and how far they are consistent with a sound Head, or an honest Heart; with *Faith* in Christ, *Love* to your Country, and a *sincere Esteem and Reverence for the Clergy*, you only can tell us.

Oh! but for all this, you love us most *affectionately!* and our *Office itself is* (you say) *evidently adapted for the Good of Mankind!* This puts me in mind of a certain warm Gentleman that happened to be a little in a Passion with his Wife; and after he had sworn an hundred times that all the whole Sex were Wh—res, yet (says he) *I love an honest Woman as well as any Man in the World.*

Can you believe that any one of your learned Readers, after you have so facetiously diverted his Spleen, blown up his Fire, enchanted him with your Oratory, and fully convinced him that the *Parsons are all Cheats*; that they have *nothing to do with Religion or the Gospel*; that a *Man may be wiser, better, and more likely to be saved without them than with them*: Can you believe, I say, that a Man once sagely convinced of the Truth of these important *Observations*, will quit them all for the sake of a *Complement*? Will he go back again to the Beginning of a long Book, and there implicitly confess with his Author, that notwithstanding all this, he *loves and respects* this wretched Gang? Or will he not rather abide by such wholesome Conclusions as these which follow? *I'll go no more after them, nor hearken to them; the best Way is to pull down their Pride, and make them work, to keep our Tithes, and pray for our own selves.*

You know very well, that these Inferences are plain, natural, and highly pleasing; and that you might spare the invidious Pains of making them in Words at length for your apt Disciples! This is your Way; and an *Art* you have carried to the greatest Perfection; you run with your Reader to
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the Brink of the Pit, then stop short, and leave him to jump in; you ply all your Strength to palm on him the Premises, and then let him alone with the pernicious Conclusion! But after all, I must say, that such *Caution* might be well dispensed with in a Scholar, and a Gentleman; and one who need not be told, that *the Times do not require it.*

But all the Rhetorick of this kind, with the endless Absurdities, Inconsistencies, and Contradictions in which it is cloathed, I leave to the Judgment and Humanity of the Reader: If there are any of us so bad as you represent us to be, I am very sorry such Offences are not removed; and that the *Reformers* of the Age are better pleased to condemn the whole, than to prosecute a few: I am glad at the same time that our Accusers are forced to content themselves with *general Calumny*; and that after all their Industry in gleaning the Scandal of all Times and Countries, they are driven at last to adorn their Subject with their own *Inventions.*

However, the Respect that is wanting to your Invectives, shall be amply made up to your Doctrines and Arguments. Whatsoever you have devised of any considerable Moment to the Church of *England*, I will examine into with a conscientious Exactness; and I hope I shall have Occasion to omit nothing, that it concerns one of my Character to defend.

But Matters of this Nature are sown very thin, before we come to your last Chapter: There we have the Sum and Substance of your Faith; there we have a Recapitulation (as it were) of your whole Scheme and Design; there we have something like an Air of Seriousness; and you seem to set forth in that Place as if you really designed to afford us somewhat in the Name of Religion, and

instead of an Establishment you had so long been deriding, reviling, and exploding.

This then is the Ground I shall choose for the Combat. Here I will stand in full Sight of the Castle you would build, as well as those you so zealously raze to make Room for it. Here I will survey your whole Frame and Fabrick; I will honestly present to the Reader's Perusal every Sentence and Paragraph of this single Paper, and discourse of them in so large a Compass, as to comprehend every material Argument or Objection of the whole Book. I will labour to set forth the Absurdity of your Opinions in such a Method, as at the same time to justify those of the Church Establish'd: I will endeavour to unravel your whole Hypothesis in so full, so clear, so extensive a Manner, without any Reserve, Equivocation, or Evasion; that if it shall be my good Fortune to spoil but this last Scene, I doubt not but the whole *Farce* will be hiss'd and laugh'd at, and that henceforth we may venture to sleep without any great Fear either for our selves or our Doctrine.

One Preliminary I must insist upon, That you will for this time permit me to consider you as a Man of Sincerity, and a *Christian*. I know you have some unlucky Jokes and Jibes; but I beg you will not oblige me to let them influence my Behaviour in debating with you. I desire to address to you with the same Gravity as if you were never so much in *earnest*; I would argue with you from those Maxims and Principles, that your self allow and build upon; I would take for granted (what you so often profess) that you *believe the Scripture to be the Word of God*, and as you pretend to raise your religious Edifice on the said *Scripture*, and on right *Reason*, I hope you will own it to be fairly overthrown, when I have demonstrated to you its Inconsistency with both.

To

To begin then with your first Words. “ I have
 “ undertaken in this Paper to prove, what me-
 “ thinks should want no Proof; namely, that the
 “ All-powerful God is not a whimsical and hu-
 “ morous Being, that governs his Creatures by
 “ Caprice, and loads them with arbitrary and use-
 “ less Burdens, which can serve to no good Pur-
 “ pose in Nature.

Your Undertaking is rare and admirable! to
prove what wants *no Proof*; to maintain what no
 body ever did or will deny! This then being your
 first *Postulatum*, and what we shall find so exceed-
 ing useful to your future Hypotheses, I allow it
 you intire, as a sure Foundation to build upon, and
 wish you Success in all your (godly) Undertak-
 ings—Yet in the *Application* of this *Maxim* there
 is some Danger! I have known Bunglers make
 crooked work after a strait Rule: For which Rea-
 sons, I desire you would give me leave to caution
 the Reader against some unrighteous *Inferences*,
 that (you know) he may be likely to draw from
 this your pious Observation.

First then, let him beware in what manner he
 apply it to God's *Revelations*! Let not this *Maxim*
 encourage too great a Freedom in trying the Doc-
 trines or Commands of Scripture by their apparent
Usefulness or *Expediency*. For we have an *Instance*
 before us, that by this way of arguing we shall be
 apt to grow familiar enough with our Creator to
censure his Proceedings; to measure his Will by our
 own Fancies; to ridicule and revile the Sacrifices
 and Ceremonies of the *Old Law*, and to slight at
 least the Sacraments of the *Gospel*: Nay, the very
Moral Precepts of the New Testament will by this
 Method be in as certain Danger, as they are cer-
 tainly contrary to some Mens Judgments or In-
 clinations. You know this is a *Free-thinking* Age,
 and we are daily furnished with *new Lights*, and
 strange

strange Observations! May there not then very probably arise some new Doctor, that may gravely infer, and maintain it too, that the Prohibition of *Fornication* (at least simple Fornication) is a *Burden* too heavy, too *arbitrary* and *humourous* to come from God? With others *Drunkenness* will soon gain the same Indulgence and Dispensation; and with a third sort, *loving our Enemies, forgiving Injuries, parting with our Goods for the Use of the Poor, the Parson, or the Prince; suffering Persecutions for the Confession of Christ, as well as Self-denial, Fasting, Humiliation, Sorrow, and Repentance,* will seem inconsistent with the wonderful *Good-nature* and *Tenderness* of our Heavenly Father: So that by this extraordinary Care, not to impute any thing to God that seems to us *capricious*, we necessarily descend to throw up all Religion to the *Caprice* of Man. I say this is a *necessary* and infallible Consequence; that if we take not our Faith or our Manners implicitly from the *Authority* of God, we must do it from the Fancy and Caprice of *Man*.

But is this the way of Subjects with their Sovereigns? It has been thought reasonable in Cases of this Nature, that the *Governed* should first consider what is the *Authority* of that Person who makes the Law, and what *Evidence* there is that it comes from him. But, these Points being settled, to quarrel with it afterwards as *humourous* and *arbitrary*, and to argue that it cannot be genuine because we are not able to perceive its *Expediency*, is a *Sauciness* that was never thought justifiable towards *human* and *fallible* Legislators. But we may say any thing to God, as long as *he is not capable of being ruffled, or put out of Humour!*

I deny not, but the incomparable *Usefulness* of the Christian Laws is a just Argument of their *Divine* Original: And were any thing alledged as a Precept of the Gospel, in Contradiction to the Law
of

of *Nature*; opposite to first and *self-evident* Principles; or inconsistent with any of the *Divine Attributes*; we ought not to receive it, or submit to its Authority: But hence to infer, that *Divine Authority* must in all Cases stand or fall by human *Fancy*; that nothing must be admitted as God's Command, that is not agreeable to our own Inclinations; that the Dictates of *Sovereign Power* must be try'd by *Expediency*, and the Subjects Judges of that *Expediency*, is, I suppose, a new Way of arguing: The arguing of those who have not a just Sense of human Frailty, Feebleness, and Folly; of their Maker's Greatness, and their own Unworthiness.

Whereas the Reflections of an humble Mind are rather these: Have I all the Proof that can be expected, or that the Nature of the thing will bear, that the Book containing those *Laws* is the *Revelation* of infinite Wisdom? Am I truly convinced, that the general Excellency of the Book it self argues it Divine? If so, these particular *Institutions*, that I cannot at present see the Reason of, I will conform to for the sake of their *Author*: I question not, but he that made them, knows their *Usefulness*, tho' I do not; and I look on it as probable, that (as every Age is justly striving to grow in *Wisdom*, to add to the Discoveries of their Forefathers; and as it is every one's *Duty* to press on farther, and dive deeper, with a meek Curiosity into the *mysterious Treasures* of Christian Theology) I say it is probable that, by a serious and diligent Application to Reason, what now seems to carnal Minds impertinent or superfluous, in another Century may be found convenient; and the things that at present some Men are so apt vainly to reject as *capricious* or ridiculous, may then manifestly appear to be *useful* and *necessary*.

But *Secondly*; If this your fundamental Axiom be applied to Men; if it be urged against the *positive*

tive Institutions of any *Church*, or incorporated Society of Christians; and if your Argument is, that such Institutions cannot *be of God*, because *useless*, &c. I will be so fair with you as to assent to the Proposition, on Condition you will allow me to smile at the Reason by which you support it. The Proposition I say is good, stanch, and orthodox; that *those Ordinances that are of human Institution, are not of divine Institution*. But the Reason is a merry one; *because you do not like them*: I say, *because you do not like them*; for this is all that you can here mean by *Uselessness* or *Inexpediency*.

This Matter of *Usefulness* must be determined either by the Approbation of the *Society* by whom such things are instituted, or by your own private Approbation. If the Society be Judges, what they determine as useful, is useful; and so human Ordinances, by your solid way of arguing, become divine Ordinances, by vertue of that *Usefulness*. But if *you* are the Judge in this Case, what you disapprove, or do not like, is *useless* and *capricious*; and the Usefulness being made the Test of its Divinity, in fair Consequence *what you like not, is not of God*. Having therefore thus gotten a *new Pope*, a new infallible Guide for our Judgments, proceed we with the better Heart to partake of your farther Instructions.

“ The Almighty is infinitely happy in his own
 “ Perfections, and cannot receive Pleasure in such
 “ Things or Actions, as only the weakest Men
 “ are fond of, and the wisest contemn. He is not
 “ capable, like Mortals, of being ruffled by Acci-
 “ dent, or surprized by Disappointments. Wis-
 “ dom, Goodness, and Felicity are essential to his
 “ Being, and consequently he could have no View
 “ in creating Mankind but their own Happiness;
 “ for we can neither add to his, nor take from it.

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The frank Confession you are here pleased to make of the Divine Attributes, I thank you for; but the *Consequences* you draw from these pious Declarations, are not quite so acceptable.

That the Almighty is *infinitely happy* in himself, is a Proposition undoubtedly true in every Part of it; but the Conclusion here represented as necessary to this Proposition (That therefore *he cannot receive Pleasure in such Things or Actions as only the weakest Men are fond of, and the wisest contemn*) however, or how far soever *true*; is yet so loose, so indefinite, so general, and so unworthy a close Reasoner, that the grossest Deceiver will not fear the Force of it, nor trouble himself to deny it; but it may be made use of, and applied to the Advantage or Disadvantage of every Sect or Opinion in the World. A *Papist* will readily declare, that *God cannot take Pleasure in what the weakest Men are fond of, &c.* because he has already determined, that we *Protestants* are the *weakest Men* in the World, and that what we are most fond of is Contention, Separation, &c. An Infidel laughs at it as a Thing beyond all Degrees of *Weakness* to confide in a crucified Saviour; and therefore will he very chearfully subscribe to that foresaid Reflection. Thus will this Argument, this glorious Aphorism serve every Purpose; till we can meet with a Person or Party, who do not think their own Ways the *wisest*, and their Adversaries the *weakest*.

But letting this pass; I will strive to trace out *your own Meaning* in this sage Observation. First then, I desire to know what you directly intend by God's *receiving Pleasure*: If you mean here an Addition to his Happiness, you might have express'd your self more plainly thus; The Almighty is *infinitely happy* already, and cannot be *more* than infinitely happy by such or such Actions of ours. For the sake of Peace, I will grant you somewhat
more

more than you ask, that *he cannot be more than infinitely happy by any Actions of ours.*

But, perhaps, by God's *receiving Pleasure* you mean (as we generally understand Places of Scripture that speak of God's Parts, or Passions, in a human Way) that he will not accept kindly, approve of, or *reward such Actions*; and I will be so much your humble Servant, as to suppose that by *such Actions* you would here signify such as have no *Moral Weight* in themselves, but are of their own Nature *indifferent, positive, and arbitrary.* Away then with all the Hopes of the ancient *Jews!* for we have at last discover'd, that God could never *approve or reward* their Conformity to *Circumcision, Sacrifice, or Ceremony* (because these Actions had no *Moral Weight* in them) and that the Promises made them in the *Old Law* were but pious Frauds, Flatteries, and Delusions.

You will readily reply, that the Ceremonies of the *Jews* were of God's own Appointment, and therefore (how *contemptible* soever they might be to *wise Men*) it was but Reason that he that establish'd them, should approve and reward Obedience to them. True, I confess——! You must know then, Christian Reader, that tho' God is generally averse enough to positive Institutions; yet once upon a time he was (forgive me, Heaven, for repeating the Argument of the *Independent Whig*) so *humourous and capricious* as himself to command *such Things and Actions as none but the weakest Men are fond of, and the wisest condemn:* Therefore it was but fair he should for that once *approve of, and reward such Things and Actions as none, &c.* Well escaped *Moses* and the Prophets!

I have here given the plain, the natural, and unstrained Construction of your Words; and I may challenge all the Free-Thinkers in the World to set them fairly in another Light. However, should
it

it be pleaded or pretended, that the Intention was only against the *Ordinances of Man*, and that you designed to declare that God would never approve or reward Obedience to such; yet this is a bold and rash Assertion, and what is as impossible for you to prove, as for me to believe!

For are you sure that God is never pleased with *Meekness, Humility, and Submission* to Governors without Regard to the *Matter* of their Injunctions? Is it impossible that these Virtues, that are so often commanded, should be ever rewarded? Is there no Virtue at all in *Peaceableness* and *Obedience*, unless the Subject be satisfy'd of the *intrinsic Usefulness* of the *Action* required? Is it likely, that what is *sincerely* done for Peace sake and for *God's sake* (as the *Mite* of the poor Widow) should be rejected and condemned by him, because it can serve to no good Purpose, nor add to his *Happiness*?

We are referr'd by the Apostle in Matters indifferent to a good *Conscience*, and to the *Customs of the Church*: We are commanded to do every thing of this Nature with *Decency*, and without Tumult, Pride, or Malice: We are inform'd, that whatever we do of this kind with a *Spirit of Love*, and a Desire to *serve* our blessed Lord, we shall be *acceptable to God*: We are exhorted to contribute to his *Praise and Glory* (tho' not to his *Happiness*) in our very *Meat and Drink*, and *every thing we do*: But you are pleased to inform us better; to let us know, that all this is Stuff and Trumpery; that all such Things or Actions (with whatever Charity, Humility, or Sincerity perform'd) are *unacceptable* and unpleasant to God, because, forsooth, *contemptible to wise Men*.

Who are then, I pray you, those *wise Men*, by whose Wisdom their Maker's must be measured? You say, he cannot take Pleasure in those Actions that *WISE MEN* condemn. If this Assertion be infallibly

infallibly true, the *infallible* Author of it should have likewise given us *infallible Information* where to find those *WISE MEN*! For probably those whom the World generally takes for *such*, may be clear otherwise. I remember the Almighty speaks with *Scorn* of some, that lay claim to that Character: He tells us, that *it is not the Wisdom of this World that he hath chosen*; that the *Wisdom of Men* (what Conceit soever they may have of themselves) *is but Foolishness with him*; that divine *Truth* may be *hid from the Wise and Prudent*, and *revealed unto Babes*; and that those who are aptest to *profess themselves wise*, are most likely to *become Fools*: He *threatens* likewise, that he will *destroy the Wisdom of the Wise*; that he will *take the Wise in the midst of their Craft*; and that he *hath chosen the weak and foolish Things of the World* on purpose to *confound those very wise and mighty Men*, in whose Eyes such Things and Actions may seem *contemptible*.

Thus does it happen, that you and your Creator are on this Point at perfect Variance! He is pleased to tell you, that the *Pretences* of wise Men are *contemptible* in his Sight; you are pleased to repartee, that if he ever *ordained Ceremonies* for the *Jews*, or approved of them in *Christians*, he has *ordained and approved of what is contemptible to wise Men*. You complement him indeed with *infinite Wisdom*; but, as infinite as it is, you proceed to set exact Bounds to it: *He could have no View in creating Mankind, but their own Happiness*.

“ It is absurd therefore to suppose, that there
 “ can be any Merit in bare Opinions and abstruse
 “ Speculations; or in the Performance of indiffe-
 “ rent and useless Actions; or indeed that any
 “ thing can be a Part of true Religion, but what
 “ has a Tendency to make Men virtuous and hap-
 “ py. The Father of Mercies will never perplex
 “ our

“ our Minds or burden our Bodies with any thing
 “ that signifies nothing.

I am certain a good Part of this Paragraph *signifies nothing*, being a mere Tautology; yet I let it down entire as it is, and so shall continue to do thro’ the whole Paper; that the Reader may see I deal fairly by you; and that there may be no Complaint that I mangle your Sentences, or spoil the Connexion.

We have then in your Words last set down no more (excepting vain Repetitions) than a very notable and natural *Consequence* of your foregoing Observations. God is not *capricious*, but *infinitely good, wise, happy*, and would have *Man* so; *Ergo, No Merit in bare Opinions, or indifferent Actions.*

You have the Fortune, in most of your Arguments to make use of general and equivocal Words; it is our Business then (according to Custom) to strive to fix the Meaning of the Terms, before we judge of the Strength or Equity of this *Conclusion*.

First then you will give me leave to presume, that the Word *Merit* is not here to be understood in a Popish Sense, as when they vainly talk as if God was their *Arbiter* thro’ their *Works* of *Merit* or *Supererogation*. Not but that such an Interpretation of the Word might be a good Refuge for you in time of close Debate, but the rest of the Sentence will not suffer us thus to take it. The Adjectives *bare, abstruse, indifferent*, demonstrate that you are not confining your Dispute only to Papists; and as you well know that we *Protestants* pretend not to *Merit* (in that high Sense) in any thing we do; so ’tis not to be doubted, but you here use the Term in the plain and modest Notion of it, in Opposition to *Fault* or *Demerit*; and that you intend only to say, that *bare Opinions, abstruse*

abstruse Speculations, or indifferent Actions are not acceptable to God, or pleasing in his Sight.

By *indifferent Actions*, I will take for granted, you mean the same that weak Men are fond of, and wise Men contemn: This I gather as from the Tenour of your Discourse, so especially from a parallel Assertion in the Paragraph last handled; for there you say, *God cannot receive Pleasure*; and here, *there can be no Merit in such Actions*.

By *bare Opinions* and *abstruse Speculations*, I am not so certain what you would have us to understand. If you mean such Opinions as have no way a Tendency to the Honour of God, or the Good of Man, I own you do well to say there is no *Merit* or *Virtue* in them; and I believe no Man ever said the contrary. But the Question is, what are those *Opinions* and *Speculations*? I would be loth to judge you here intend to condemn our *Assent* to the numerous Doctrines revealed to us in the sacred Scripture, the *Belief* of those Discoveries there made us of God's Nature, his Providence, and his Will; because in all Probability he would never have revealed and proposed them to us as the Objects of our Study, our Speculation, and Belief, had not such Study, *Speculation*, and *Belief* been acceptable to him: And because you yourself (in your fourth Paper) was so kind as to bear this lucky Testimony, "The Scriptures are justly stiled the revealed Will of God, and are address'd to all Mankind, and given to remain as a *Rule of Faith* and Manners unto the End of the World." I say, for these Reasons I would fain hope that your *bare Opinions*, and *abstruse Speculations* are not our Articles of Faith as revealed in the holy Scripture. Yet when I read on, and observe your Industry in depreciating *Faith*; when I see the godly Pains you are at to reduce all Opinions in Religion to one; when I remember your plentiful

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Scoffs

Scoffs and Reproaches of such things as *Creeds*, *Orthodoxy*, and the like, I can never persuade my self, they are able to bear any other Construction.

Thus then stand your Arguments (stript of all Equivocation and Disguise) in naked Simplicity:

God is infinitely wise, happy, and good; *ergo*, it cannot be acceptable to him to believe any thing but what is very plain, and plainly useful, in his own Word; nay, tho' himself gave the whole as our *Rule of Faith*. Again,

God is infinitely wise, happy, and good; *ergo*, it cannot be acceptable to him to obey his own Commands, when those Commands happen to be about things in themselves *indifferent*.

Thus fall at once the *Works* of a Jew, and the *Faith* of a Christian!

I think I may defy all the Glosses in the World to set your Words in a juster Light. I have given them their fair and natural Signification; I have render'd them by parallel Phrases and Expressions; and in perfect Harmony with the Bent of your Discourse. Your Position is universally, necessarily, and eternally true, that *God is infinitely wise*, &c. that which you draw as the necessary Consequence of that Position must be as universally and eternally true too, *Therefore can he not be pleased*, &c.

However, you are pleas'd immediately to afford us one Exception to this general Rule; one Instance wherein this universal, this necessary, and eternal Consequence was not strong enough to hold, with respect to Performance of such positive *Commands* of God, as *all wise Men condemn*.

“ *Moses* indeed gave the *Jews* a carnal Law, a
“ Law of Bondage, a Yoke which neither they
“ nor their Posterity could bear, Statutes which
“ were not good, and Judgments by which they
“ could not live.

It is but a reasonable Question now to demand of you, why an *Infinite* and *Omnipotent* God can do a thing once, and not again and again? Take Notice, I pray you, that you draw your Argument from the *Nature* of God, which is necessarily unchangeable; the *same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*. You know very well, that the Question is not what God *has done*, but what he *can do*; and as you here allow, that God has once commanded the Performance of *indifferent* and *useless* Actions (for so you stile all those Actions that are not naturally good) I ask you, what hinders him from doing it often; and how are you sure since he has once done it, that it is *contrary* to his *Nature*, and that he will be never *able* to do it more?

Behold! Reader, the Reasons are at hand!

“ But these were given them for the Hardness
 “ of their Hearts, and as Punishments for their
 “ manifold Sins and Iniquities. And besides, they
 “ were only to last for a time, and afterwards to
 “ give way to a simple, pure, and perfect Law;
 “ to a spiritual, innocent and undefiled Religion,
 “ free from their own fond Superstitions, and the
 “ stale Idolatries of the Gentiles; not loaded ei-
 “ ther with Priests, Sacrifices, or Ceremonies; a
 “ Religion to consist in Spirit and in Truth, and
 “ intended to make Men wiser and better.

The first Reason why God could never but once command indifferent Actions or Things contrary to his Nature, is, because he never but once had Occasion so to do. These were given them for the *Hardness of their Hearts*, and as *Punishments for their Sins*. As sure then as we are all now perfectly free from *Hardness of Heart*, and that Mankind is since come to such a State of Perfection as to have no need of *Punishment for Sin*; so sure are we, that God can never repeat his Injunction of Things or Actions in themselves indifferent. Oh

glorious Race! who have no need of *Guides* on Earth, nor a *Master* in Heaven! God cannot command us *indifferent* Things, because of our *Purity* and *Integrity*; and for the same Reason he need not command us any thing else! If he does the former, he is *arbitrary*; if the latter, *humourous* and capricious! I am sorry the World is not grateful enough to you for this uncommon *Benevolence* to your Species, this unparallel'd *Zeal* for universal *Liberty*!

I have spoken to your first Reason, and your second is like unto it. *And besides they were only to last for a Time, and afterwards to give Way, &c.* That is, (if I apprehend you right) God gave these *Statutes*, this *Law*, this *Yoke* once; but that once is not *always*: As God gave them as a *Punishment for Sin*, so it must not be expected they can last longer than *Sin*; the Cause ceasing, the Effect ceaseth of course.

I have already taken Notice, that your Argument stands thus. Because God is infinitely *wise*, *good*, &c. therefore he cannot be *pleased* with *indifferent Actions*. If this be a necessary Consequence, it can never fail: For God's Perfections are eternal, and *unchangeable*; and what necessarily flows from an *unchangeable* Cause, is itself *unchangeable*; so that it is impossible by this *Rule* that God could ever be pleased with the Observance of the *Jewish Law*. But if your Consequence be not *necessary*, what has once been the *Will* of infinite Perfection, may be so often or always. If he ever did approve of *indifferent Actions*, who shall hinder him from doing it again? There is no such Thing as Time or Chance with an eternal and self-existent Being. Nothing is *necessary* to him, but what is essential to him; and what is essential, is always so.

The rest of this Paragraph is a Complement to one of God's Dispensations at the Cost of the other.

" Give way to a simple, pure, and perfect Law ;
 " a spiritual, innocent, and undefiled Religion,
 " free from their own fond Superstitions, and the
 " stale Idolatries of the Gentiles; not loaded, &c.

'Tis very plain, that the Aim of these pious Strains of Eloquence is to set forth the Opposition betwixt the Law and the Gospel: And as the Design of the latter is here said to be to *free* them (the *Jews*) from the former; and as one Branch of this *Deliverance* is here represented to be a *Freedom* from the *stale Idolatries of the Gentiles*; so I think it is most manifest, that in your Opinion these *stale Idolatries* were a Part of that *Law revealed to Moses*. Be that as you and the Reader can best agree about it: This I am sure of, that by *their own fond Superstitions* you can mean nothing but that very Religion you had just before owned *was given them by God*. There is no body doubts, but that the Law of *external Ordinances* was to be set aside by the Christian Covenant; but why is it therefore to be ridiculed or blasphemed? or with what Modesty or Decency that which had infinite Wisdom for its Author can be stiled *fond*, or *superstitious*, I must leave you to consider. You must not come off by saying, that by these hard Terms you meant only the *Traditions* of their own Invention; for these *Traditions*, or any thing of their *own*, is no Part of the *Question*. The Dispute is not about *Tokes and Burdens* of their own assuming; nor can God be properly said to *release* them from a *Bondage* he never *imposed*. But this *carnal Law* which Christ was to *free* them from, is the very same that you just now allowed to be *laid on them for their Sins*; to be *laid on them for a Time*, and to be *laid on them* (that once) *by God himself*; for whose

whose sake, I fancy, you might have spared to accuse it of *fond Superstitions*.

After we have once acknowledged of any Doctrine or Precept, that the Almighty was its Author, methinks 'tis something worse than Presumption to reproach, reject, or quarrel with it. The Prerogative of the Sovereign ought to over-rule and suppress all Dislike in the Subject. The Declarations of infinite Wisdom may fairly challenge an implicit Assent, and his Commands an implicit Obedience; at least from all those who acknowledge their Authority. Whatever is plainly in the Word of God, a modest Man will treat with Reverence, tho' he does not immediately discover its Expediency or its natural Probability. However, this we may venture to say of God's Revelations both in the Old and New Testament, that (take them in general) they are well able to stand the strictest and severest Trial.

The Law of *Moses* was calculated for a poor, ignorant, and illiterate People; whose Bodies had been worn with Labour and Drudgery, and whose Spirits were sunk and degenerate by Slavery and Persecution. They had seen nothing round them but pompous Worship, Prostrations, and Sacrificings, and were then hardly capable of conceiving any Notions of a *Spiritual Devotion*. The Gods that all their Neighbours fell down to were material and visible, the Adoration paid to them corporeal and gesticular; and as it was highly requisite to restrain them from such gross *Objects* of Devotion; so it was no less expedient, for a while at least, to indulge them in the *Manner*.

It was absolutely necessary to let them understand, that the God of their Fathers was not *Stock* or *Stone*; that he was Infinite, Eternal, Invisible, Incomparable, Incomprehensible; and it was hardly practicable to hinder them from addressing to

him in a Way suitable to their low Capacities. Humanly speaking, it had been impossible (in the Circumstances they then were) that any other than an external, ceremonial, busy and formal Manner of Worship could have been agreeable or useful to them; could have kept their Minds on the Deliverances of their Fathers, and God's Promises to themselves; or with-held them from running back into the Idolatry of the Nations.

However, should any other Person take upon him profanely to intimate, that this Law of *Moses* was an unreasonable Burden, arbitrary, useless, capricious, alien from true Religion, and inconsistent with infinite Wisdom, Goodness, and Felicity, I have much more to answer in its Justification. But for *your* Part, as you are pleased at the same time to own that it was the *Contrivance* of God, I beg leave of *you* to conclude, without more Words, that it could not have been *contrived* better.

As good an Apology may be made for those Doctrines in the *Christian Dispensation*, that Authors think it becomes them to be so merry with, as hard and mysterious. This new Revelation is an Improvement of the old: *When we were Children, we were in Bondage under the Elements of the World; but when the Fulness of Time was come, God sent forth his Son.* The World, that before was but in its *Infancy*, is now become of Age! Here therefore we have a farther Discovery of the Divine Nature; a deeper View into the Counsels of Heaven; a richer Prospect of God's Loving-kindness, his *Grace* and his *Will*. The Doctrines of the New Testament were design'd for Philosophers; for the most learned and studious Sects, and Ages; and for (at that Time) the most polite, curious, and inquisitive Nations, the *Greeks* and *Romans*.

He that made us, gave us a Thirst after Knowledge; and he knew that that *Thirst* would make

us

us naturally covetous of new Discoveries, and ambitious to be the Authors of some *Addition* to the Lessons received from our Forefathers. You have reason to know, that human *Wit* is ungovernable, and as painful as the Cholick; and we plainly find, that where Matter is wanting for Harangue, Descant, or Ridicule, a great Genius must break out in *Invention*. As the Law then was given to employ the Body or the Memory; so here we have an Exercise for the Fancy and Judgment; to keep them intent on the Business of Eternity, to restrain them from hatching Novelty and Mischief. *In Christ* (says the Apostle) *are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge*; *Treasures*, to excite Study and Industry; *hid*, to employ them. I have been long of Opinion, that several *mysterious Expressions*, obscure and ambiguous Hints, seeming Contradictions, or (as you would call them) *abstruse Speculations*, and *Metaphysical Paradoxes* which we find in the New Testament, were purposely dictated by the *holy Inspirer*, as Food for our Imaginations, Spurs to Diligence, Checks to Vain-Glory, and Talks to keep us from *running* too wantonly *after our own Inventions*; and at the same time to furnish us with Opportunities of exercising the Virtues of Meekness and Humility; of manifesting our Faith towards our great Creator, and our Charity and Good-Nature towards those who in Things differ from us. I am sincerely of Opinion, that if Christianity did consist (as you would make it) in one sole Article, in a Precept or two, or but a few of each, and those plain, obvious, and incontrovertible; it would soon cease to be the Object of our Affections, and even the Rule of our Practice.

Men will not regard what can afford no Exercise for the Faculties of the Mind; they will seldom think on what can administer no Occasion of Discourse

Discourse or Debate; they will set no Value on what costs 'em no Pains, nor can yield them Praise; they will soon despise that Treasure, wherein every Plowman is as rich as themselves. Your great *Wit* especially would be apt to object, that it was hardly worth the while of the Son of God to come from Heaven, to teach us no more than we knew before by the *Light of Nature*; and I doubt they would think it below their Greatness to meditate much on that Subject, in which nothing new is to be learnt, and wherein so many before them must have gotten to the *Ne plus*. And, as our Religion would thus naturally cease to be the Object of our Esteem, it is very unlikely it should long retain its Influence on our Lives. It could not be long, after this Rate, but we should be reduced merely to *Rote* and *Habit* for the Conduct of our Actions; and how any good *Habit* should be produced in us; or how (if produced) it should be able to encounter Interest and Ambition, Appetite and Passion, I leave you to discover.

I am ready to subscribe to your judicious Maxim, that *what is necessary to Salvation must be indisputably plain*: But I hope you mean only plain to those to whom it is necessary. Every thing that is necessary, must be plainly the Word of God; and every thing that is plainly the Word of God, must be necessary, whether to believe or to do. But yet I hope it does not hence follow, that what is plain to you must be necessary to your *Dairy-Maid*; nor what is plain to her, is all that is necessary for you. The Creator commits to one *ten*, to another *five*, and to a third but *one Talent*; it is the Duty of every Person to make the best of his *Lord's Treasure*; and no body can doubt but a Gentleman of your *Genius*, Education, and other Advantages, had had very much to answer for, had you not made some extraordinary Improvements in Divinity, and in

in the *Reformation* of the World. The Almighty has laid before us a *large Field* to labour in, to improve, and cultivate: No human Strength is able to arrive at *Perfection* in it, but it is every one's Business to do his *best*. The meanest Mechanick hath *something* therein, both to believe and to practise; and that *something* is within the Reach of his Understanding, if he diligently seek it; a more exalted Knowledge and Virtue is required of the *Wise* and *Learned*; and if they attain not to it, it is their own Fault. I am astonish'd therefore, when I hear a Gentleman of the first Accomplishments, building and depending on such Inconsequences as these:

Nothing is *necessary*, but what is *plain*; Therefore but *one Article*; therefore but *two Precepts*; and (what is yet stranger) therefore *no need of Guides*.

" It seems plain to me, that there is but one
 " Article of Faith in all this Religion, and that
 " essential to the very Being of it, namely, that
 " *Jesus is the Messiah*: Without this preliminary
 " Acknowledgment, his Mission could not have
 " been owned, nor his Precepts obey'd; which
 " are nothing else but Exhortations to Love, and
 " Directions for social Happiness, and which he
 " has enforced by annexing eternal Rewards to the
 " Observance of them. Hitherto Virtue had expected its Reward in this Life; but our Saviour gave new Sanctions to it, by bringing Life and Immortality to Light.

" There is no Proposition in all Scripture more
 " evidently revealed, or laid down in more positive
 " and express Terms, than that the Confession of
 " this Truth was the Basis and Support of Christianity, the *Unum Magnum* necessary to be believed: Every thing else is practical Duty, and Belief is no farther concerned in it, than as it
 " produces

“ produces Practice. For before we can think
 “ ourselves obliged by a Precept, we must be sa-
 “ tisfied of its Reasonableness, or of the Legisla-
 “ tor's Authority.

“ The World had been so long corrupted by
 “ Superstition, and deluded and abused by selfish
 “ and lying Priests, who taught Wickedness for
 “ Virtue, and Nonsense for Philosophy, and placed
 “ Devotion in foolish Ceremonies and Sacrifices,
 “ and in ridiculous Cringes, antick Vestments and
 “ Grimaces; that nothing less than a Divine Le-
 “ gislator with the Power of Miracles could re-
 “ store Men to their Senses, and to natural Reli-
 “ gion. The sole Article therefore that our Savi-
 “ our made necessary to be believed, was, that he
 “ came from God, and acted by the Authority of
 “ God. Then every one would see the Impossibi-
 “ lity, that he could deceive or mislead Men,
 “ and consequently would take his Word for every
 “ thing else in the Sense he understood it.

“ And this Proceeding was agreeable to eternal
 “ Reason; namely, to make nothing necessary in
 “ Belief, which was not necessary to Practice:
 “ For what Purpose could be served in obliging
 “ Men to believe, or rather say they believed, my-
 “ sterious and unintelligible Propositions? Such
 “ Articles are only the Watch-words of a Party,
 “ and can never be the Objects of a real Assent;
 “ for no Man can be said to believe what he does
 “ not understand, and has not suitable Ideas of as
 “ far as his Belief goes. We must understand the
 “ Meaning of every Term in a Proposition, before
 “ we can assent to it, or dissent from it; for
 “ Words of which we do not understand the
 “ Signification, are the same to us as if they had no
 “ Signification at all. How much therefore more
 “ honest and prudent would it be to own at first
 “ our Ignorance concerning certain abstruse Spe-
 “ culations,

“ culations, than to form Propositions about them;
 “ and then confess we do not understand our own
 “ Definitions and Explanations; and call out He-
 “ resy and Atheism, when we are desired to speak
 “ intelligibly, and tell what we mean?

These four Paragraphs I have set down together, to save the Connection; and to present the Reader with a fair Opportunity of seeing your Sentiments on this Subject entire. If he cannot understand them, 'tis not my Fault; nor am I able to help him: For I confess my Weakness, that after all the Pains I have taken to consider them, I am still farther in the dark; the oftener I peruse them, the more Difficulties, *Abstrusities*, and *Paradoxes* I find in them.

This I can observe, that *Mystery* is the *Abomination*! Every thing that is *necessary* must be *plain* and *easy*! and therefore, in order to make it so, our whole Faith is reduced to *one* short *Article*! But the worst is, this *one Article* (as you furnish it out) is beyond my Understanding or Belief; and puzzles me more than the *Thirty-nine* of the Church of *England*.

What you intend by making it a *Preliminary*, without assigning any others to follow it; a *Basis*, without Superstructure; in the second of these Paragraphs, *necessary* without regard to Practice; in the third, *necessary* only as it does regard Practice: What we are strictly to understand by the *Belief* of it, or *Assent* to it; whether such Assent be *necessary* to make us barely Christians in *Name*, or whether it be able of itself to entitle us to the *Rewards* of Christianity; whether without this *Article* we cannot be justified; whether this will be sufficient to justify us singly; or whether it must be in Conjunction with others, and yet those others not necessary: All these to me are unintelligible Questions and *abstruse Speculations*; and if I should

should desire you next time to speak intelligibly, and tell what you mean, I hope you are not so much a Tory as to call me Heretick or Atheist.

There is but One Article of Faith (say you) in all this Religion (so the rest of the Scriptures you may do what you will with) Paragr. 1. Again, The sole Article our Saviour made necessary to be believed was, &c. Parag. 2.

As you are a sworn Enemy to unintelligible Propositions—I desire you to give me a fair and fixed Explanation of these Terms, *Necessary, solely necessary, only necessary!* Is it so necessary, that without it *no Man can be saved*; or is this Article so only necessary, that a Man may be saved by it without any others? If the former be your Meaning, I am concern'd to think how you will bring off your *Infidels* and *sincere Heathens*; If the latter, I desire you would inform me what the Almighty requires us to do with the rest of his Discoveries and Declarations to us; and in what Sense you were pleas'd to call them *our Rule of Faith*.

I know you will reply, that if we believe his *Mission*, we shall by certain Consequence take his *Word* for every thing else. You will give me leave to suppose, that Words signify the same in your Mouth as in other Mens: If so, I may say, taking a Man's *Word* is the same as believing it. So that this last Expression of yours is thus to be render'd: If we believe his *Mission*, we shall consequently believe every thing else in his Sacred Word. I think I may affirm, that whatever is a necessary Consequence, is as necessary as its Premises; wherefore, to assert that Belief of *Christ's Word* is consequentially necessary, but the Belief of his *Mission* is only necessary, is the same as to assert, that the Belief of his Word is necessary and not necessary at the same time; that the Belief of his *Mission* is only necessary, and yet something else is necessary.

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Your Reply to this will be, that this Article is the *first*, the *Basis*, the *Unum Magnum*, the *Preliminary*; and therefore (as plain as a Pike-Staff) the *only* Article. If this Consequence be infallible, you might easily (if you had thought on't) have brought your *Commandments* to the same Number with your Articles; for in my Opinion it will be no great Difficulty to prove that this (*thou shalt have none other Gods but me*) is the *first*, the *Basis*, the *Preliminary Commandment*.

But this Preliminary of yours, I am afraid (if Disputes should arise) will hardly be able to maintain the Precedence you are pleased to assign it. As suppose, for Instance, you were going to convert a Heathen or downright Atheist to the Christian Religion; how would he stare, if you should abruptly accost him with your grand Preliminary?

"Hark you, Friend (quoth the Independent Whig) *you must believe that Jesus is the Messiah. What's that to me?* (quoth the graceless Infidel.)

"Why, I tell thee plainly, if thou dost not believe that Jesus was sent by God, thou must go without the best and easiest Religion in the World.

I do not trouble my Head about Religion (says the other again;) nor do I know who this Jesus you talk of was; nor who, nor what that God that sent him: But if you can tell me any thing for my Good, tell it in Words that I can understand, and I will thankfully bear you.

"Why I tell thee (replies the holy Missionary with some Warmth) there is nothing to be learnt before the *Basis* and *Preliminary*, and that is, that *Jesus is the Messiah*; but then, for thy Comfort, whatever thou learnest afterwards about this Jesus or his Errand, thou mayst choose whether thou wilt believe or no.

The Man is mad (quoth the sawcy Pagan.) I will first know who the Sender is; what Authority he has

has over me; what Relation I have to him, or Dependance on him; before I will hearken to any of his Ambassadors.

Thus obstinate and indocible are Men in the State of corrupt Nature! I allow your Talent at instructing and reforming to be very extraordinary; I own also; that the Generality of your Scholars are not so captious, and hard to be persuaded: However, it may happen in the Course of your pious Ministry, that you may meet with such blunt and surly Questions as I have above intimated; and if so, I am afraid you will be obliged not only to enlarge your *Creed*, but to alter the *Precedence*; to begin with the Articles, that *there is a God*; that that God is Omnipotent; that he made us, governs us, will judge us, and the like; before you will be able effectually to cram down this your *sole Preliminary*.

Perhaps, some of your candid Readers may think I have taken you a little too strictly and literally in this last Paragraph of mine; for that the Belief of the Being of a God is *presupposed* before any System of Religion, as also necessarily implied in this *one Article*.

I should have been glad, if you had been pleased to tell us any thing of this Nature, because I might thence have taken an Occasion of begging your Solution of the following Difficulties: Whether the Belief of *God the Father* is *one* with the Belief of *Jesus Christ his only Son*: Whether an Article that is necessarily imply'd is itself necessary: Whether any thing ought to be *presupposed* as a Preliminary to the *grand Preliminary*: Whether an Article of Faith necessary before the Christian Religion, and in order to it, upon the imbracing of it becomes not necessary: Whether that Belief, without which a Man cannot be a Christian, is not necessary to a Christian: Whether the Being of God

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is more necessarily implied in these bare Terms, *Jesus is the Anointed* (for so you should have rendered them) than the Office and Dignity of the Person *Anointed*; or than our own Need of him, or Dependence on him; or than the Completion of the Predictions concerning the *Anointed* in the Old Testament: Whether, all these things being presupposed, they are not to be believed also: Whether if they are to be presupposed in a *Jew*, they are to be presupposed in a *Gentile* also; or whether (this Word *anointed* having so plain Respect to the Old Testament, and being to be explained by it) we had not best to devise another *Preliminary* that will better suit with *Gentile-Converts*?

All these, and some more of their Fellows, are material *Questions*; and I must insist on a plain and categorical Answer to them, before you complain that I have done you Injustice by taking your Words in their natural Construction. Till this be done, you must give me leave to take it for granted, that *One sole Article* does not honestly and properly signify *Many Articles*. And as oft as I read these Expressions under your own Hand—*There is but one Article of Faith in all this Religion*—*The Confession of this Truth is the Unum Magnum requisite to be believed*—*These plain Texts, &c. make only this Article necessary to be believed, and supersede all others*—I say, I cannot help concluding from these your own Expressions, naked and unexpounded, that the Christian Religion (in your Opinion) requires no other Article whatsoever, but that *Jesus is the Messiah*; that no other is directly or indirectly, *à priori* or *à posteriori*, necessary to a Christian.

But farther; I would know in what Manner this Article is to be swallow'd. Is a bare Assent to it, as to a Proposition we do not understand, but

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admit as a Truth on the Authority of the Speaker, sufficient for us? No; this smells too strong of *Orthodoxy* and *implicit Faith*. Besides, you have expressly declared unto us in the fourth of these Paragraphs, that *No Man can be said to believe what he does not understand*; and again, *We must understand every Term in a Proposition before we can assent to it, or dissent from it*. To which, if I may presume to add my Opinion, I think, if we are reduced to but *one single Article*, and know nothing of that neither, *Religion* is brought into a very moderate *Compass*!

When you tell us therefore, that it is necessary to believe that *Jesus is the Messiah*, we are to conclude our selves bound to *understand every Term* in that Proposition. Alack and Pity for the poor People of this Country who do not understand *Hebrew*!

However, you and I will agree to allow them so much *implicit Faith* as is requisite for the Translation; and let them for once take the Article as you your self have translated it; *Jesus came from God, and acted by his Authority*. I doubt it will be still necessary for them to know the Nature of his *Errand*, and of his *Office*; why he was called *Jesus*; who gave him that expressive *Title*; after what Manner he came into the World; and what *Need* the World had of him: What sort of *Person* this *Messenger* was; what *Relation* he bore to *God* who sent him, as well as to *Man* to whom he was sent; by what *Means* he effected the great Work of our Redemption: That he laid down his Life to be a *Propitiation* for our Sins; that he *arose* again the third Day from the Dead; that he is *ascended* up into Heaven, there to be our *Mediator*, *Advocate*, and *Judge*. Before any one can come to an explicit Knowledge of every *Term* in this *one Article*, it will be very needful to *resolve* these Questions, and to

to have a *clear Understanding* of these Propositions. Is it then *necessary* for a Christian to *understand* them, and yet not *necessary* for him to *believe* them? Or is it agreeable to the great Virtue of Sincerity, not to *believe* what we *know* to be true?

After all that I have said, it may perhaps still *seem plain* to you, that there is but *one essential Article* in all our Religion; and I confess it *seems as plain* to me, that we had as good part with that *one* too, as all the rest; and that this *ONE* cannot subsist without its Fellows.

You say, indeed, (as true as an Oracle) that *Without this preliminary Acknowledgment, his Mission could not have been owned*; that is, in plain homely *English*, *Without this One Article we should not have this One Article*; what no body can deny, &c.

The *One Article* in this first Paragraph, I suppose may be the same with the *Sole Article* in the third Paragraph. The *ONE ARTICLE* is, that *Jesus is the Messiah*; the *SOLE ARTICLE* is, that *he came from God, and acted by his Authority*. If then you will grant me this humble *Postulatum*, that an Acknowledgment of this *one or sole Article*, is an Acknowledgment of his Mission; I think, that the *one or sole Article*, that *JESUS IS THE MESSIAH*, is a Preliminary to this *one or sole Article*, that *HE CAME FROM GOD*. Not that these be two *different Articles*, but only *one Article*, tho' one be here mentioned as a *Preliminary* to the *other*. I find then that these are different Phrases to express one and the same Thing, *THE ONE SOLE ARTICLE OF FAITH*; and therefore, that this *grand Preliminary* is, after all, but a *Preliminary* to its own dear self.

However, you add, that it is concern'd in Practice as well as Principle; it is a *Preliminary towards obeying his Precepts*. This must be granted; and

Preliminaries of this Nature we have abundance more (and Need enough there is of them) in the holy Scriptures! For unless we believed that there is an *Omnipotent God*; that he *sees our Actions*, and will *judge us* for them; that he *abhors Sin*, and will *punish* it; that there are *eternal Rewards* for the Obedient and Virtuous, and *eternal Punishments* for the Wicked and Rebellious; I say (with Relation to Practice) if we do not *believe* these and diverse other of *God's Declarations* in his holy Word; I am afraid your *single Preliminary* will go but little way in Opposition to Lust and Interest, and in the Reformation of the World.

His *Precepts*, indeed, as you are pleased to set them forth, do not seem so very difficult; "*which are nothing else but Exhortations to Love, and Directions for social Happiness, and which he has enforced by annexing eternal Rewards to the Ob-*"
servance of them.

What is that Man made of, who will not be a Christian on your Terms? He may get a Title to *eternal Reward*, if he will but be honest, good-natured and merry; if he take Care not to give himself too much unto *Prayer*, or to such *whimsical Stuff* as *Fasting* and *Mortification*; if he does not *perplex his Mind* with the *Study of God's Word*, nor *burden his Body* with Attendance on his Worship.

Is this then the Behaviour that the Christian Religion prescribes us? We are told by the great Author of that Religion, that he came to *fill up the Law and the Prophets*; to improve Mankind in the Knowledge of God, in Virtue and Piety: And we are told by a modern Apostle of his, that *this is a Religion worthy of God, and fit for Men of Sense and Philosophers!* Wherein then, I pray you, are its peculiar Excellencies; and what is there in it (according to your Scheme) but every *Moralist Teacher,*

Teacher, and even *Impostor*, among the Heathens pretended to? The *one Article*, I confess, may happen to be boggled at by some Persons; and truly much the sooner for that it is but *one*: But for your Precepts, *Epicurus* or *Mahomet* have as largely provided, as you represent the Gospel to have done. *LOVE* and *SOCIAL HAPPINESS* are general Terms, easily prostituted to any Cause or Party, and equally boasted of by Persons whose Actions are directly opposite; insomuch that there is not a Sectary, Libertine, or Infidel, who will not pretend to be endued with the former, and a Contributor towards the latter. The *Jesuit* is for *burning* Mens Bodies, 'tis true; but 'tis all out of flaming *Love* to their Souls; and that others, by their Examples, may learn *Peace*, *Obedience*, and *Uniformity*; which are (in his Opinion) the very *Basis* and *Support*, the *Unum Magnum* requisite to *Social Happiness*. The Libertine loves his Friend, his Mistress, and his Bottle; would hinder no Man from taking his Pleasure in his own Way; spends his Estate in the Encrease of *Trade* and Consumption of *Manufactures*; May he not then be very well thought a *Promoter* of *Social Happiness*, or, in other Terms, a *merry Fellow*, or good Christian?

But perhaps you will labour to secure your Proposition by interpreting these Precepts in the fullest Sense (as our Saviour is to be understood, when he says, *On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*; or the Apostle, when he affirms, *LOVE to be the Fulfilling of the Law*.) The *LOVE* then, that you here mean, is such a *Love to God*, as will excite us to the Discharge of every Duty we owe him; and such a *Love to our Neighbour*, as prevails on us to contribute all we can to his Well-being. I own then (with you) that the Precepts of the Gospel are all *nothing but LOVE*; such Love as will oblige us to perform

every Duty to God and Man; that is, nothing else but every thing.

But what can be the Reason that so much Pains are taken to curtail our Faith, and to cut short our practical Duties? Is it that the World is become over-righteous, virtuous, and scrupulous; or is it to signify that there is no *Need* of the *Parsons* to teach them to be so? Is it to shape Religion to the World and to its *Fashions*, to render it consistent with Mens beloved *Pleasures*; or is it in meer Spight to undervalue and depreciate the Labours of the *Pulpit*? Is it to propagate the *Name* of Christianity with the Destruction of the *Thing*; or is it to recommend the *Profession* of Godliness, by a plain Sacrifice of the *Power* thereof? For which of these weighty Reasons is it, that nothing *mysterious* in Divinity is to be believed, and nothing *difficult* or painful to be performed?

What can be Mens Views in flattering a vicious and degenerate Age with these delusive and pernicious Propositions? *The Precepts of the Gospel are nothing else but Exhortations to Love, and Directions for social Happiness! The Father of Mercies could never design to perplex Mens Minds, nor burden their Bodies; and sent his Son to restore Men to their Senses and to Natural Religion! The Creator could have no View in making Mankind, but their own Happiness!* How natural will it be to corrupt Flesh and Blood to infer from these *Maxims*, that they should enjoy themselves and their Pleasures; eat, drink, embrace, and be merry; and esteem those their greatest Enemies, who would persuade them to deny themselves any carnal Diversion? How easily will they be brought, with a little farther of your Assistance, to laugh at the Doctrines of *Self-denial* and *Mortification*? of *Fasting*, to suppress their unlawful Desires, and of a hearty *Sorrow and Contrition* for those they have indulged? How soon will they

they conclude, that all the Almighty expects of them is to do no Mischief? That if they take Care neither to rob, spoil, or persecute, they are *good Christians*, and may enjoy themselves as they think fit? That God will not cross them, nor interrupt their *Happiness*? That they may come reaking from the Brandy-Shop or the Stews, and be very fit to appear at his Worship, or partake of his Ordinances?

I know very well you are able to answer these Expostulations, by saying that you do not pretend to justify these carnal Inferences; and by demonstrating that *Vice* of any Sort is inconsistent with *Social Happiness*. When you have thus answered me, I am answered. Oh that I could see you bestow a little of your luxuriant Eloquence on such a Subject! I wish also you had not forgot with your Sanction of *eternal Rewards* to the Obedient, to join *eternal Punishments* to the Disobedient! But the one (you may say) is *implied in the other*.

But then, methinks, you should allow it to be necessary to *believe* these *eternal Rewards* and *Punishments*, in order to excite our Endeavours to observe that Law, to which they are the *Sanctions*. It may be replied, that *a Law is the Object not of Faith but Obedience*! I own it; the Law, (as it is a Rule of Practice) the *directory* Part is the Object of Obedience; but then the *Sanctions* being *future*, and in the *Will* of the *Legislator*, there the Subject has no other Security but his *Credibility* and *Fidelity*. The Christian then must either *believe* these Promises of *eternal Rewards*, before he can enjoy them; or else he may *enjoy* them, tho' he believed them an *Imposture*. Again, it must be his Duty to *believe* these *Penalties*; or else (being damned for Unbelief) he is damned for not doing what was not his Duty. There is nothing more likely to create Disobedience, than not believing the *Penal-*

ty; the Man does not believe it, and by that only Means is disobedient, and *condemned* to it; yet (according to your Doctrine of *One Article*) that good God who made him *for his own Happiness*, requires him not to *believe* that *Penalty*; tho' he eternally *damns* him for no other Reason, but because he did not *believe* it.

The third of these Paragraphs having in it something extraordinary, I beg the Reader's Patience to repeat it.

“ The World had been so long corrupted by
 “ Superstition, and deluded and abused by selfish
 “ and lying Priests, who taught Wickedness for
 “ Virtue, and Nonsense for Philosophy, and placed
 “ Devotion in foolish Ceremonies and Sacrifices,
 “ and in ridiculous Cringes, antick Vestments and
 “ Grimaces; that nothing less than a Divine Le-
 “ gislator with the Power of Miracles could re-
 “ store Men to their Senses, and to natural Reli-
 “ gion.

What may be the Cause of so insuperable a *Prejudice*, I will not pretend to guess; but no one can help observing, how your Gall arises as oft as you have occasion to mention the *Priests*; and that you cannot speak of that Order of Men with any tolerable Temper, Charity, or Decency. However, this is not the Business I am upon: I am not considering *Satire*, but *Argument*; nor should I ever have undertaken to contend with you on these Subjects, had your Writings been fraught only with *personal* Abuses. Yet in this place I cannot but tell you with some Concern, that your Passion has transported you to utter Words that savour not a little of *Prophaneness*, *Blasphemy*, and even *Insincerity*.

You often talk of the ever-blessed *Jesus* with some Respect and Reverence: In this Paragraph you stile him a *Divine Legislator*, one that *came*
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from God, and one who could not possibly *deceive* or *mislead*: You often quote the Scriptures of the New Testament as the Doctrines revealed by this *Divine Messenger*, and affirm their *Authority* by pretending to bring them in proof of your Assertions: At the same time you cannot be ignorant, that this very *Jesus*, in this New Testament, ratifies the *old*; that he always speaks of it as the *Word of God*, and more than once expressly calls it by that very *Name*: Nor ought you to forget, that in your 24th Paper we have this Testimony from your own *Mouth*, that “ Both the *Jewish* “ and *Christian* Law were deliver’d and enforced “ with manifest Signs and Demonstrations of God’s “ extraordinary Presence and Power: ” Yet, after all this, do you here represent this very *Law* and *Religion* of the *Jews* so miraculously *established*, and so well *attested*; you represent it, I say, in Colours more becoming the vilest *Imposture*; you solemnly charge it with *Wickedness*, *Nonsense* and *Superstition*; with *foolish Ceremonies*, *ridiculous Cringes*, *antick Vestments* and *Grimaces*. These are hard Words! And I am sorry you think fit to fasten them on any thing that has God for its Author!

I would, if possible, have excused you from the Guilt of these rash Invectives, by flattering myself that the Reproach was design’d for the idolatrous Worship of the *Gentiles*. I wish you had once told us so, tho’ but in a small Parenthesis! But I am afraid the Reader, when he remembers with what Freedom you handle *Moses*, and his Dispensation but a little before; when he considers that one Design of Christ’s coming was indeed to *set free* the *Jews* from their *legal Yoke*; when he compares these with your other Words in a former Paragraph; how that this *Yoke* was but to last for a *Time*, and afterwards to give *Way* to a *simple, pure* and

and perfect Law; especially when he observes that all this Trumpery is reckon'd over to introduce with better Grace your NATURAL RELIGION: I am afraid, I say, upon all these Considerations, that no impartial Reader but will suspect that this *Restoration* of Natural Religion is here design'd to hint at the Interruption was given to it by a certain *Revelation* you have no Kindness for; that this Word *Natural* (as it stands in direct Opposition to *Revealed*) is here set down on purpose to reproach it; and in fine that all this *Calumny* was cut out, to dress up *Moses and the Prophets*.

But why is all this *Delusion* and Corruption (if it must be so called) charged on the *Priests*? I remember you told us in a former Paper, that *Priests* had nothing left to their Discretion in the *old Law*, but that every Step and *Circumstance* of their Business was cut out for them by the *Civil Magistrate*, even to the very *Cloaths* on their Backs. You told us likewise, that *Moses* was properly the *Civil Magistrate*; and every Parish Clark sufficiently understands that among the *Israelites* the Face of *Religion* continually altered with the Complexion of the State: Nor is any Child ignorant that the Kings of *Israel* and *Judah* were perpetually establishing and re-establishing, changing, corrupting, reforming, depraving, or advancing the worship of God, or of Idols, as it came into their Heads or Hearts.

And as with the Seed of *Abraham*, so with the *Gentiles*. Each national *Government* found it impossible to keep their People in due Subjection without the help of *Religion*. No Chain, unless it reached their Souls, was strong enough to hold them; no Virtue was to be depended on, nor Truth ascertain'd; neither could Oaths be credit-ed, nor Justice administer'd; Titles decided, nor Offenders punish'd without the *Fear of God*; nor
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could they expect to flourish at Home or be formidable Abroad, without improving in their People the Notions (implanted in their Nature) of an *invisible, supernatural* Blessing and Assistance on one Hand, and Punishment on the other.

For these Reasons did every *State* receive such a *Set of Theology*, and religious Worship, as they Thought would best carry on these *Ends*, according to their own Scheme of *Government*: And to strike the greater Awe into the Populace, they commonly pretended they had it directly or indirectly *revealed* by the *immortal Gods*. So that whatever were the Abuses or Impositions in this Affair, the *Craft* and *Wickedness* that you charge on the *Priests*, are principally due to the *Civil Magistrate*. The *Priests* were only *Officers* and *Ministers*, to labour in the *Religion established* by their Masters; their Commission was wholly and solely from their Prince; and for any fraudulent or unjust Determinations they had no more to answer, than his *Officers of State*, his *Soldiers* or his *Judges*, for Matters in their Way.

But whoever was to answer for these Delusions, I may venture to assert, they were for the common *Good*, and even for the Good of those who were so deluded. I wou'd not be understood to patronise Fraud, tho' never so piously intended! Blessed be the Messiah, there is now not the least Occasion of it! But this I say, that it was happy for these Nations, whose natural Notions of God and Religion were fixed and improved, tho' by Imposture. I would undertake to prove by a thousand Arguments, and as many instances, that a bad Religion as well as Government in any Nation, is better than none. I challenge the World to give one Instance, or Argument, that ever a People was or can be great and happy without an *Establishment* of this kind; and therefore as long as it pleased
God

God to leave the World to the meer *Light of Nature*, I will not say, but that very *Devotion* which would be now abominable, might have his Connivance and Indulgence. I can hardly persuade my self that all the *Auguries* and *Omens*, so much talkt of by the honest *old Romans*, were utterly useleſs and deluſive; or that the *Uſe* they found in them, was thro' the Suggeſtions of the *Devil*: My Reaſons are, for that I obſerve, at the Times when they moſt religiously conſulted and depended on theſe *Divinations*, they were moſt ſucceſſful in their Enterpriſes; they were moſt virtuous and upright in their Lives; moſt juſt to their Neighbours; moſt uſeful to the World; and the greateſt Adverſaries to *Satan's Intereſt*.

But however all this was no more than the *Device of Man*! It was artfully built on *Natural Religion*; ſupported by *Fable* and *Fiction*, and unable to maintain its Credit, after the World began to grow learned and inquiſitive! The Authority and Reputation of theſe holy Frauds (how uſeful ſoever) began to decline (together with the Manners of the Profeſſors) thro' the Improvements of *Philology* and *human Learning*: No wonder therefore, that when ſo divine a Lawgiver as our Saviour appear'd with ſo powerful Credentials, the moſt politick Statesmen, or the moſt potent Princes were not able to ſupport them; but they ſoon gave Way to the *pure*, celeftial, and refined *Doctrines* of Chriſt crucified.

Yet, after all, are we here given to underſtand, that the Buſineſs of this glorious and heavenly Legiſlator was to *reſtore* us (forſooth) to *national Religion*. Good God! Was this the mighty *all*, for which thy Son was manifeſt? Were all theſe miraculous Works, theſe unparallel'd Sufferings, that amazing Reſurrection of thy only begotten Son, for nothing but to deſtroy what thy own Hands had

bad wrought; to unlearn Men the Lessons they were taught by thy own Messengers, *Moses* and the Prophets; to *restore* them to Blindness and Ignorance; and to set them once more to groping in the dark after the *unknown God*?

I am sorry to see how some Men labour, upon every Occasion, to depreciate the inestimable *Work* of our Redemption! *One Article* is enough to believe, one or two plain moral Commands to perform; and here the Business of the Messiah was but to *restore* us to our *Senses* (which we had left I suppose by Revelation) and to *Natural Religion*. How great Pity it was that so small a Matter should cost so dear! Was there no other Expedient Heaven could have found out to let the World know that Religion was a *Cheat*, and the Priests a pack of Knaves? Could not *Epicurus*, or some of his Disciples, have given their Fellow Creatures a little *spiritual Hellebore*? Was there no *Freethinker*, no *Independent Whig* to be possibly brought forth in those Ages of the World, who could have cry'd *Priestcraft*, and bid Men beware of *Establishment*, *Orthodoxy* and *Revelation*? Or if it was eternally decreed, that such a *Restorer* should be *crucified* also; might not one of these latter have served as well? Might it not have been done with as little Guilt to the Inflicters, and as little Sorrow to good Men?

But, for my Part, I cannot persuade my self, but there was something more in the *Incarnation* and *Passion* of the Son of God, than is here suggested. I observe his Apostles constantly stile him a *Sacrifice* and *Propitiation*: Himself tells us, that he came not to *destroy*, but to *fulfil* and *improve* the Law and the Prophets; to lay down his Life for the *Salvation* of the World; to give his *Life a Ransom*, &c. And so many Texts to this Purpose are constantly occurring in the New Testament,

that it is impossible to conceive that any serious Person can believe Christ a *Tescher* come from God, and not believe him also a *Saviour*, a *Redeemer*, a *Propitiation*, *Sacrifice* and *Advocate*. What then shall we think to be your deep Design in these pregnant Words? Shall we charitably hope they fell into this Sentence only by Accident; or shall we deem them a two-edg'd Reflection on *Revelation*; a private Hint to recommend the Religion of a *Deist*, *Natural Religion*?

But alas! What is this *Natural Religion*, after all we can boast of it without Improvements? It is beyond all Contradiction, that (where there was no Revelation) it was of Necessity strengthened, shaped and made useful by the *Artifice of Man*. See what sorrowful Work it made in the Ages before the Deluge, notwithstanding the long Lives of the Patriarchs, and those Assistances it had by *Oral Tradition*. Nay, with the best of its human Improvements and Establishments, I cannot think you will venture to compare it, either for *Wisdom* or *Usefulness*, with that very *Law of Moses* which you have gone so far out of your Way to contemn and undervalue.

I am sorry to mention the Precepts of the Gospel in no better Company: But if you please to enquire into the *Divinity* of the *Egyptians*, *Assyrians*, or even the learned and accomplish'd *Greeks* and *Romans*; if you examine the *Notions* they had of their Creator, and with what sort of *Service* and *Sacrifice* they sought to appease him, and gain his Favour; I assure my self you will generously pronounce (tho' against your self) that the Lessons of Christianity may be more properly stiled a *Reformation*, an *Improvement*, an *Exaltation* of Reason and *Natural Religion*, than a *Restoration* to them.

Had our Saviour reduced us to meer *Natural Religion*,

ligion, we may guess by those barbarous and idolatrous Nations, who at this Day are in Possession of that precious Gift, what hopeful Improvements we should have made of it. And as you have very judiciously observed, that *by the Decay of Religion Priestcraft flourishes*; so I cannot but admire this your own *Observation* does not prevail on you to set a greater Price on that Doctrine, that (you say) has neither *Priest, Ceremony* nor *Sacrifice*.

“ The sole Article* therefore that our Saviour
 “ made necessary to be believed was, that he came
 “ from God and acted by the Authority of God.
 “ Then every one would see the Impossibility that
 “ he could deceive or mislead Men; and consequently
 “ would take his Word for every thing
 “ else in the Sense he understood it.

I own these Words have graceful *Sounds*! But before I can be e'er the wiser or better for them, I must desire to be satisfied in the following Particulars. *First*, Whether by *taking his Word* is meant *believing it*? *Secondly*, If his Word be to be believed as well as taken, whether your one *Article* and none but that, be contained in that *Word*; and what we must then understand by *every thing else*? *Thirdly*, What is the full Purport of this weighty Phrase, *In the Sense he understood it*? I wou'd fain be informed how we shall come to know in what Sense he *understood it*, that we may unanimously subscribe to it. Whether that *Sense* be *One only*, and that certain, self evident, and infallibly *plain*; or whether Men of different Opinions may each take it in their own *Sense*, and yet all in the *Sense* of the *infallible Author*: Or rather, whether we had not best to choose one *infallible Guide* to settle such *Uniformity*. These Difficulties (tho' perhaps Trifles to the Learned, yet) I confess, to me and some of my Friends, are really insuperable: Nor shall I ever be able to get over them,

'till you shall be pleased to prove (and what can you not prove?) that *nothing* and *every thing* is the same thing; that *taking a Man's Word* is a Phrase to signify we need not *believe it*; that one may properly assent to the Opinion of another, before he knows what it is; that ten different *Senses* of the same Word may be but one *Sense* at the same Time; or that *one* and *ten* are the very same.

" And this proceeding was agreeable to eternal Reason, namely to make nothing necessary in Belief which was not necessary to Practice.

I am sorry to meet with such Argumentation in an *Author*, the Credit of whose *Judgment* is but too well established, to afford any Excuse for his WILL! What shall we then think of such palpable Sophism?

Your very last Assertion was, that the *sole Article* that our Saviour made *necessary* was, that he *came from God*; this you here call God's *proceeding*; and this you explain by the Word *namely*, into *making nothing necessary in Belief that is not necessary to Practice*. Is it demonstrable, or self evident, that there is but *one Article necessary to Practice*? Or are these two Propositions,

There is but one Article necessary to be believed:

Nothing is necessary to Belief that is not necessary to Practice:

I say, are these two perfectly and intirely the same (as you here represent them)? Do you design to grant (as is implied in the Words) that whatever is *necessary to Practice* is necessary to be *believed*? And do you grant this in order to infer, to explain or to demonstrate, that there is but *one Article*? What Force you might put, or what Colours you might give to the Word *necessary*, if you had a mind to banter or to harangue upon it, I cannot foresee: But I appeal to your own generous Heart, and to the impartial Reader, whether

a Be-

a Belief of God's infinite Power and Knowledge, his Hatred of Sin, the Judgment to come, eternal Rewards and Punishments, and a few more Doctrines of the like Importance, may not, in all probability, be as effectual to the Suppression of Vice and Wickedness, as this single naked Article: Whether they may not with as great Truth and Propriety of Speech, be said to be *necessary* towards a moral Life and Conversation, as the Persuasion that *Jesus is the Messiah*.——But next comes the solid Reason of the late Proposition.

“ For what Purpose could be served in obliging Men to believe, or rather say they believed, mysterious and unintelligible Propositions?

What Freedoms do Men of Wit and Learning take with their poor fellow Creatures! Could any Author, that had not Mankind in the most abject Contempt, prevail on his own Modesty to offer this to the World as Argument? *Nothing is necessary to Belief which is not necessary to Practice; For to what Purpose should Men believe mysterious Propositions?* The whole Argument stands thus: There is but *one Article necessary to Belief, because there is but one necessary to Practice*. That there is but one *necessary to Practice* is plain, because there is but one but what is *mysterious and unintelligible*. If ever you have Occasion, in a future Edition, to repeat this Argument, I hope you will not forget to found it on these two very reasonable Postulatus: That *every Proposition that is not necessary to Practice, is mysterious and unintelligible*.

That this (*Jesus is the Messiah*) is the only Proposition in Religion that is truly intelligible, unless you please to lay these down as *Bases and Preliminaries*; vain Men may flatter themselves that they understand many Propositions, which have not the least regard to Practice: They may fancy also that divers other Articles of Faith are as easy to be understood,

derstood, as that *Jesus is the Messiah*; and so fall at length into the unpardonable Supposition, that they are not only *necessary* to Practice but to Belief also.

“ Such Articles are only the Watch-Words of a Party, and can never be the Object of a real Assent; for no Man can be said to believe what he does not understand, &c.

It might well be expected that the Words *mysterious* and *unintelligible* would afford you an Opportunity to display your Eloquence; and truly so vastly plentiful is your Stock of that Commodity, that it is no wonder you sometimes go out of your Way to vend it. But my Business is not to remark on your Oratory, or provoke your Wit; but with humble Submission to enquire into the Truth of your Assertions, and the Weight of your Arguments.

The main then that I shall object to, in this whole Harangue, is, your positive Assertion in these Words; *mysterious Articles can never be the Objects of a real Assent*. I hope you will pardon me if I hesitate a little at this Maxim (however infallible it may seem to you) because it is directly opposite to Fact within my own Observation. The Mother is instructing her Child in Religion, and, among many other things, tells it, that *God the Father*, for the sake of his *only Son*, has prepared a Place at his own right Hand for the Righteous; and that there is also a *Hell* for the Wicked, a *Lake of Fire* that will for ever burn, and yet not consume them. All this the Child heartily believes, and daily repeats, without the least Doubt or Scruple: And I think we may affirm (as far as we can affirm any thing of another's Thoughts) that these Articles (taught by the Mother) are *really* the Objects of that Child's *real Assent*. The Question then is, whether these Articles be *mysterious* to that

that Child or not; if *mysterious* (as I believe you will find if you examine his *Ideas* of all the *Terms* in the *Propositions*) then it appears, that what is *mysterious* may be the *Object* of *Assent*: But if these Articles are no way mysterious, then however we have found more than *one Article* in Religion that is plain and intelligible.

Again, a Bean daily talks of the Antipodes; when his Boy offends him, he curses him thither; swears to his Lady he will go *so far himself to oblige her Lap-Dog*; and that *there are such People* is a Proposition he really assents to: But can any one think that the poor Soul has suitable Ideas of such People; or can he represent them otherwise in his shallow Noddle, than as Persons with their Heads downward?

Among many Propositions that *your Inferiors* firmly and really believe and assent to, this is one, that *Man is indued with a rational and immortal Soul*; yet pardon me, great Sir, if I humbly suppose, that you your self would be under some Difficulty if you offered to *describe* this spiritual Inhabitant, to let us *clearly understand* how or when it comes in or goes out of the Body; where it resides during its abode in the Flesh; and how it subsists, or with what Organs it works or rests after its Departure. Yet you are pleas'd to repeat with great Assurance, that *no Man can be said to believe what he does not understand*. And again, *that he must understand the meaning of every Term in a Proposition, before he can assent to it, or dissent from it*.

I have had the Pain to hear abundance of Wit and Banter thrown away at good Christians, for owning the Belief of what is *above* their Understanding; and it has been often gravely, tho' vainly asserted, that *above* the Reach of Reason, and *contrary* to Reason, is the *very same thing*. I am

very unwilling to judge any one for Principle or Opinion; and yet (if my Salvation depended upon it) I cannot help suspecting this Error to be wilful and affected; or at least the Effect of the grossest Prejudice, Indolence or Carelessness!

For what Man is there of so mean a Capacity, as not to have a clear, distinct Idea of these two Words, ABOVE, CONTRARY? Or what School-Boy is not able to demonstrate a manifest Difference betwixt two such Propositions as these,

It is impossible to be done;

I cannot conceive how it is done?

How few are there that have just Ideas of the Motion of the Earth, or are so much as acquainted with the Arguments that support that Hypothesis? Yet are there thousands who *really* and truly *assent* to it on the Testimony of others, whom they think too wise to be deceived, and too good to deceive. How imperfect a Notion have the best of your Philosophers of the *mysterious Dominion* the Soul of Man has over his Body; how lame an Account are they able to give of the *manner how* every Limb is in such incomparable Subjection, or by what *secret Springs* so much Life, Strength and Vigour is convey'd to each Muscle on the least Inclination of the *Mind*? Yet does no body question the *Being* of this unintelligible *Dominion*; nor does any one doubt of the mutual Dependance, Relation or Sympathy betwixt the Soul and Body, tho' there were endless Contentions *how far* they extend, or what is the exact Nature of *incomprehensible Union*.

I have the fortune to be acquainted with an honest rational Man who was born blind, who (I find) has not the least Idea of Colours, nor is capable of receiving any such; yet being ask'd one Day, what Colour his Coat was of; he answer'd, without the least Doubt or Hesitation, that it was

Scarlet:

Scarlet : And enquiring farther, what Reasons he had for thinking it so; I was told by him, that he had all the *Evidence* for it that could be possibly had of a *thing not seen*, or discovered by the Senses; particularly that he was told so by both Friends and Enemies, that it was so represented by every Person, who either purposely or accidentally, had discoursed of it. Upon the whole, I found that this Proposition (*my Coat is Scarlet*) was as much the *Object* of his *real Assent*, as an Article of Faith can possibly be.

I had a Curiosity to try him farther, and endeavour'd to persuade him, that whatever the *Colour* of his Coat was, the *Matter* whereof it was made was *Pancake*; and by a private Wink or two I easily produced several substantial Witnesses to attest it. I shall not trouble you with an Apology for this useful Curiosity, nor need I tell you our whole Discourse; but after all that I or my Vouchers could say, he resolutely affirm'd that if the whole World told him so, *he would not believe it*; that he knew very well the *Nature* of *Pancake*, and that it was *contrary* to his Reason, and the Information of his Senses to think that *his Coat was made of it*. I reply'd, he had nothing but the *Testimony* of others, that his Coat was *Scarlet*; and ask'd him, why he would not take the same *Testimony*, that it was made of *Pancake*? To which he gave me this honest Answer:

The Colour is a thing *above* my Apprehension; and I can take your Words that it is *Scarlet*, because I have no Reason that it should not be so.

But the *Matter* is within my *own Understanding*, and it is in every respect *contrary* to my Reason to think it *Pancake*.

There is not a Person who can read this Paper, but can furnish you with more Instances of this Nature: But say what we can, those Opinions that are the Product of the *Will* are not to be subdued.

For my own Part, I can safely say I have study'd this Subject with all the Freedom and Indifference that Man is capable of, and cannot persuade my self but *above* my Understanding, and *contrary* to it, are Terms widely different. If I am informed that *two and two* are in all respects *equal to five*; or that *one individual Body is in divers Places at once*; neither of these Propositions can I believe on any *Authority* whatsoever. Not on *Man's*, because I have at present a Knowledge of all the Parts of each Proposition as my Author can have, and have as much Reason to *know* that they *cannot be true*, as he can to know that any thing is true. Not on *God's*, because nothing is so certain with me, as that God is *good* and *just*; and because it is contrary to that *Goodness* and *Justice* to implant in me a Desire after Truth, to make it my Duty to search for and pursue it, to give me Means and Faculties to attain it, and then by this Instance to elude all these, to make them useless and my self miserable.

But if I am told, that *God made the World out of nothing*, seeing the Nature of empty Space, and the Extent of Omnipotence is above my Understanding (seeing likewise the Difficulty will be altogether as great, if it be affirm'd, that he made it out of *something* pre-existent, unless I knew who made that *something*) I say, I readily and sincerely assent to this *mysterious Proposition*, because he himself (that made it) tells me so. Yet, I say, I do not pretend to *understand* the meaning of every Term in this Proposition: And perhaps it would be a Task, your self would hardly undertake, to give a full and compleat Idea of the Word NOTHING, as there used.

Propositions are of a very different Nature, as well as the Evidences by which they are supported. To one I give an explicit Assent, because I comprehend the *manner how*; as well as am satisfied

fied of the Goodness of the Evidence: Another I cannot understand or comprehend, yet I *assent* to it as a certain Truth, because I have no Evidence why it should not be so; and because I have it from unquestionable *Authority*. Tho' the Nature of these two *Assents* be something different, yet both are *real Assents*; and 'tis to be hoped a good Christian may as *firmly* believe, that Jesus Christ was *conceiv'd by the Holy Ghost*, as that he *was born of a Woman*.

This is what I had at present to object to these Assertions of yours (*That no Man can believe, &c. That we must understand the meaning, &c.*); and I now leave them to your second Thoughts, and to the unprejudic'd Reader. But after all, if we are to believe *only that Jesus is the Messias*, because we are to believe only what we punctually and explicitly understand, it will be incumbent on you to make good these two unavoidable Consequences: *First*, That every Christian (for what is necessary must be general) understands all the Terms of this your own Article, that *Jesus is the Messias*. *Secondly*, That there is no other *Article* in Religion to be understood but that.

" But to the Proofs from Scripture: *John* iii.
 " 8. says, He that believeth on him is not con-
 " demn'd, but he that believeth not is condemn'd
 " already. And *ψ*. 36. He that believeth on the
 " Son hath everlasting Life; and he that believeth
 " not on the Son shall not see Life. And Chap.
 " vi. 40. Every one who seeth the Son and be-
 " lieveth on him, may live eternally. And *ψ*. 31.
 " I am the living Bread which came down from
 " Heaven; if any Man eat of this he shall live
 " for ever. And *Acts* x. 43. To him all the Pro-
 " phets bear Witness, that thro' his Name who-
 " soever shall believe in him shall receive Remissi-
 " on of Sins. And Chap. xvi. *ψ*. 31. And they

" said believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou
 " shalt be saved and thy House. And *Romans* x.
 " v. 9. If thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the
 " Lord Jesus, and believe in thy Heart that God
 " raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
 " First Epistle of *John* Chap. iv. v. 2, 3. and 15.
 " and Chap. v. v. 1. to the same Purpose.

These are your Texts, and I believe I could help
 you to many more of as great Import to your
 Cause as these. But to me it is astonishing, that
 you who are wont to be so scrupulous, and curious
 in the Point of Evidence; so perfectly innocent of
 the Sin of *Credulity* in religious Matters; you that
 can rarely submit to any Argument beneath a De-
 monstration, I say, I am amazed that you can con-
 tent your self with such slender Proof for your *one*
Article; especially when I consider that this *one* is
 all that you have. When so powerful an Advocate
 pleads at this rate, Men are apt to fear there is
 something *on his Tongue*; but sure no body will
 suspect you would drop or betray this *sole single*
Article, because you would then have never a
 one at all!

But do you expect I should particularly examine
 the Weight of these Proofs, or do you in good
 earnest think that the Texts you have been pleased
 to set before us, have the least Tendency to main-
 tain your own *one Article*, and that there is *only one*?
 I doubt not but you will laugh at my Pains, which
 you know to be needless; but for the Reader's sake
 I will a little consider them.

The first then is *John* iii. 18. where you are
 pleas'd to tell us, that *John* says, (but had you ta-
 ken the Words from the *Bible* and not from the
Concordance, you would have told us, *Our Saviour*
says, and you would have seen on what Occasion
 he says) *He that believeth on him is not condemn'd,*
but he that believeth not is condemned already.

These

These are the Words of Christ to *Nicodemus*, a Ruler of the *Jews*; and to do you Justice, I must own, that here are four or five Verses all to the same Purpose: But you can give a very good *Reason* why the 15th, 16th, or 17th, were not so proper for your Turn! Our Lord having spoken of *Moses*, and declared the Design of his lifting up the *Brazen Serpent in the Wilderness*, *ψ. 14, 15.* tells the *Jews*, that it was out of pure *Love to the World* that God gave his only Begotten for its Redemption, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting Life, *ψ. 16.* Now either of these is altogether as much to the Support of your *one Article* as the 18th Verse; but then in those is unluckily imply'd the *Necessity* of a Redeemer, a Propitiation, &c. It is also suggested that he who should thus propitiate must have some extraordinary personal Merit (*the only Begotten, &c.*) and thence, beyond all Reply to be infer'd, that the Office of this Redeemer was something more than to step into the World, and make Proclamation that all Men should return to *Natural Religion*. The 18th therefore (where Christ is presented (without Title or Epithet) only the simple Pronoun *Him*) is made Choice of, as most consistent with the rest of your System; *He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is, &c.*

But let us consider these Words to your utmost Advantage; and pray what is there in them; or what can be made of them, more than that God requires us, on pain of Damnation, to believe in Christ? To believe in him, How? Why to believe him to be the *only Son of God*; to believe him to be the *Messias*, as typify'd and promised in the Old Testament; to believe him a Redeemer, a Ransom, a Saviour, as represented in the Context. Let any one attentively read this Chapter, and then

then judge whether this be not the plain, the literal, and the necessary Construction of the Words.

Our Saviour was here talking to a Man who already believed the *Articles* that were previous to the Christian Dispensation; one who was of a Sect that were well acquainted with *Moses* and the *Prophets*, and as such our Lord addresses to him. There was no need to begin with him from the first Principles of Divinity (as the Apostles when they preached to the barbarous *Gentiles*); but Jesus knowing him to believe already, that *there was a God, but one God*, that he was the *Maker and Governor of the World*, that he was *offended with Mankind thro' Adam's Transgression*; that there was a *Necessity of a Redeemer*; and that a Redeemer had been long *promised and foretold* in the Old Testament. He falls directly to inform the *Jew* that himself was this *Redeemer*, and to shew him the Consequence, the bitter Consequence of refusing and rejecting him.

I know there is nothing but an Author of your Abilities can put a Gloss on! But can you persuade your own self to think, that our Lord's not mentioning those previous Articles to *Nicodemus*, is an Evidence that it was not his Duty to believe them? Can you offer such Violence to your own Conscience, as to affirm, that his stopping at this *Article*, is a Demonstration that there are none to follow?

The Business of *Nicodemus's* coming to Christ was to be admitted as a *private Disciple*, and accordingly at first Word he acknowledged his *Mission*, almost in your own Words, that *he was a Teacher come from God with the Power of Miracles*: But Jesus lets him know that that was not enough, he must (if he would be his Disciple) be *born again*, become a *new Creature*, enter into a new *Covenant*, and believe him not only as a *Teacher*,
but

but a Saviour, the Hopes of Israel, the Christ or Messias, that the World thro' him might be saved. This was the Point at present to be fixed, he was not only to believe Christ's Mission, but he was to believe the Nature, the Circumstances and the End of it, before he could be a worthy Disciple of such a Master.

But suppose our Lord had pleased to admit him on the first bare Confession of his Mission, yet was that all that was to be done? Was he to be a Disciple where there was nothing farther needful to be learnt, or was he to learn the Doctrines of Christ and yet not believe them? Were not those Disciples of his who believed his Mission, bound also to believe his Words? And had it not been less Affront and Offence, (both against the Father and Son) to doubt and require farther Tokens of his divine Authority, than to believe that, and yet by Incredulity to call him a Lyar?

You may reply again and again, that a Belief of his Word is necessarily comprehended in the Belief of his Authority; and you must suffer me to answer you again and again, that a thing cannot be necessary and not necessary at the same time, and in the same respect.

Your Affirmation (in the next Paragraph) is, that we cannot be truly said to believe him, whilst we reject his Commandments: My Affirmation at all Times is, that we cannot be truly said to believe his Mission, unless we believe the Doctrines he preached to us: And let the World judge whether the Consequence contained in my Affirmation, is not as good as yours. If you allow it necessary. (or necessarily imply'd, which is the same thing) to the Belief of his Mission to believe his Word, I think, I may presume that whatever we find in that Word, is necessary to be believed; and consequently, as ma-

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ny Propositions as any Man finds in Christ's Word, are so many necessary Articles of his Faith.

Your next Quotation is the last Verse of the same Chapter, in reading which I cannot but smile to see what small Feats *great Folks* will play to *serve an Hypothesis!* The Words in the Gospel (both in the Greek and English) are these: *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting Life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see Life.*

The former Part of this Verse is put to your Purpose, but the latter Part giving an untoward Intimation, that there is something to be believed besides the *Mission*, by a Dexterity peculiar to great Editors, the little Word *ON* is quietly slipt in here too, to bring it over imperceptibly to your Side. And who would have thought a poor puny *Mono-syllable* should have been taken Notice of, especially the Phrase running in *English* so much like the former, and so few of your Readers troubling themselves much with the *Greek Testament*, when the Difference is more obvious?

I hope then, in your next Edition, you will be so kind to let the Text stand as *St. John* left it, and then the latter Clause of it will be a compleat Answer to any thing you can urge in behalf of the *one Article* out of the former. But were we obliged to submit to your own Alteration, there is nothing more in it, or to be made of it, than what is fairly refuted in my Answer to the Text before handled.

As to the Texts in the 6th of *St. John*, I will venture them (as you have done) with the Reader without any Annotation; I desire him to read over the whole Chapter, and if he can there find any one Argument, or Shadow of an Argument, to support your Doctrine of only one *Article*, he is too quick-fighted for my Direction.

I might

I might almost as well pass over that of *Acts* x. 43. but you will think your self and your Observations slighted! These are the Words of *St. Peter*, in his Speech or Sermon to *Cornelius* and his Friends, who were *devout Men* and *Profelytes* to the Religion of the *Jews*; and therefore if the Apostle had abruptly declared, that it was necessary that they shou'd believe, that *Jesus was the Messias*, no more could have been justly inferred from it, than from what our Lord said to *Nicodemus*. But the proceeding here is so gradual and punctual, and the Discourse so directly opposite to your Principle, that (had not the Concordance again betray'd you) 'tis impossible you could have been prevailed on to make use of this Quotation. You will pardon me if I transcribe the whole Sermon.

Then *Peter* opened his Mouth and said, of a Truth I perceive that God is no respecter of Persons;

But in every Nation he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness is accepted with him.

The Word which God sent unto the Children of *Israel*, preaching Peace by *Jesus Christ* (he is Lord of all).

That Word, I say, you know which was published throughout all *Judea*, and began from *Galilee* after the Baptism which *John* preached.

How God anointed *Jesus of Nazareth* with the Holy Ghost and with Power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil, for God was with him.

And we are Witnesses of all things which he did, both in the Land of the *Jews* and in *Jerusalem*, whom they slew and hanged on a Tree.

Him God raised up the third Day, and shewed him openly.

Not to all the People, but unto Witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the Dead.

And he commanded us to preach unto the People, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of Quick and Dead.

To him give all the Prophets Witness, that thro' his Name whosoever believeth in him shall receive Remission of Sins.

It is beyond all Controversy, that the Design of this excellent Discourse was to convince the Hearers, that tho' the Word of Christ was sent first and principally to the *Children of Israel*; yet that the *Gentiles* were also intitled to the Benefits of it, if (like *Cornelius*) they behaved so as to be thought worthy of God's Visitation, if they were honestly and sincerely disposed to embrace the *Christian Faith*.

Wherefore to work in them a rational, well-grounded, and stedfast *Faith*, the Apostle (appealing to Facts that in Part they knew and believed already) recapitulates the main *Evidences* on which it stood, and the *chief Articles* of which it was composed: As namely, the *preaching of John the Baptist*, Christ's *publick Unction* by the Holy Spirit in the Shape of a Dove; his miraculous *Power*, and his *Exercise* of it; his *doing good*, and opposing Satan's Interest; his *Crucifixion* and *Resurrection* on the third Day; the *Testimony* of the Apostles to whom he was openly shewed, and who did eat and drink with him, &c. the *Commission* he gave them to preach the Gospel, and to testify that he was *ordained to be the Judge*, &c.; and last of all the *Testimony* of the Prophets, *To him give all the Prophets Witness*, &c.

There can be no Benefit in spinning out a Discourse, in proving that which is of it self as clear

as Words can make it. I therefore beg leave only to ask these plain Questions.

1. Are there not more than *one, two, or three* Propositions in this Sermon tender'd to *Cornelius* and his Friends, as Objects of their Faith?

2. If nothing was proposed to them in the Name of an Article, but that *Jesus was the Messias* (of which there is not the least Appearance); yet supposing this, were they to believe that *Jesus is the Messias* merely from the Sound of the *Words*, or for the sake of those *Facts* by which the Truth of that Article is evidenc'd?

3. If they were to believe the Article for the sake of the *Facts*, was it not first necessary they should believe the *Facts*? Or may one believe a Proposition on Account of the *Evidence*, and yet not believe the *Evidence* on whose Account we believe the Proposition?

4. Are not the *Unction*, the *Power*, the *Goodness*, and the *Resurrection* of our Lord, here proposed by the Apostle as *Facts* in *Evidence* of his *Mission*, and consequently are not that *Unction*, *Resurrection*, &c. *necessary* to be believed?

The next Place of Scripture you call in to your Assistance is *Acts* xvi. 31. Here the Jailor being frighted at the terrible Miracle that was wrought by or in behalf of *Paul* and *Silas*, very hastily asked them, *What he must do to be saved?* To which Question he received a short and ready Answer, *Believe on the Lord Jesus*, &c. But now to infer from this quick Reply, that there was nothing else to be done but to assent to, to rehearse or to subscribe these *naked Words*, without the Necessity of learning or believing any other Proposition, would be laught at in me, and many others; but may pass well enough in an Author, whose Assertions are current for Demonstrations.

But if you had read but the very next Verse, you might soon have seen that there was really something farther to be learnt, that *they spake unto him the Word of the Lord*; and what could that possibly be but explaining to him the 'foresaid Injunction, and instructing him farther in the Doctrine of Christ, and the Nature of his Covenant? I would fain be informed whether the *Word of the Lord* here mentioned could be any other than the Story of what Christ *did, suffered and taught*, as well as an Account of his *Person and Relations*; and whether the Jaylor after he had thus heard the *Word* expounded, could have been so readily accepted and *baptized*, had he told the Apostles he did not believe it? But we are assured in the 34th Verse, that he *did believe in God with all his House*.

And what is here meant by believing in God? Is this spoken of the *Messias* himself? If so, we have got another small Article, that he not only came from God, but *was God*. But if this be *spoken of God the Father*, I must however conclude, that this was not meant barely of his *Being* but of his *Word*, his *Dispensations* and *Proceedings* in the Redemption of lost Man (which will amount to sundry other Articles, if made the best of); for the Behaviour of this Person, and God's Mercy towards him, are Demonstrations to me, that he was not a meer *Atheist*, even before this Action.

Another most notable Testimony on your Side is in the Epistle to the *Romans*, Chap. x. 9. *If thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine Heart that God raised him from the Dead, thou shalt be saved*. You will pardon me, Sir, if I put the Reader in Mind that this Verse is quoted to shew him, that he has *no other necessary Article of Faith but that Jesus is the Messias!* But does the Text tell us so in so many Words? No! It tells us but of *one Article* indeed;

deed; but that unkindly happens to be a different Article, the Article of the *Resurrection*! If thou shalt believe in thy Heart that God raised him, &c. I am astonished to see a Writer of your Genius trusting to such Evidence! I am troubled to think that not one of your Texts will speak for you; but in every particular your own Weapons turn upon you. They say there is a secret Fate in all things: If so, 'tis plain that you and the Bible are decreed to perpetual Enmity.

Well, but is there no Gloss to be put on this Matter? May it not be said, that believing Christ's *Resurrection* and his *Mission* are all one; because the former is an *Evidence* of the latter? An Evidence it is, and Evidences there are many of the same Proposition, but they are all different from the Proposition it self. But if the *Resurrection* is necessary to be believed as one with his *Mission*, because an Argument of it; with a little of this Indulgence we might make a huge long Creed, and say it all concern'd *Christ's Mission*, and therefore is all but one Article, and necessary for you to swallow. But to let alone such choaking Suggestions, I humbly ask you, if his *Resurrection* be one with his *Mission*, because an Argument thereof; why we may not say the same of his miraculous *Incarnation*, his amazing *Works*, his heavenly *Doctrines*, his *Predictions*, his *Ascension*, and his whole Story? And since you are so kind as to allow us to put into our Creed, that the *third Day he arose again from the Dead*; I have some hopes you will permit us to confess also (for Confession your Text tells us is likewise necessary) that *he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; that he was crucified, dead and buried; that he ascended into Heaven, and from thence shall come (as himself hath told us) to judge the Quick and the Dead.* I say, I can see no Reason why these, and
F
a few

a few more, may not as justly be annexed to the *Mission*, as the Article of the *Resurrection*; nor why *ten* may not as properly be said to be *ONE*, as *two* can be.

We have now nothing behind but four Verses of St. *John's* first Epistle. The two first are together, Chap. iv. 2, 3. The two others are Verse fifteen of the same Chapter, and the first Verse of the fifth Chapter. These you thought it your wisest Way not to transcribe, in hopes (belike) that by this Time your Readers had their Belly full of Scripture; and that rather than give themselves the trouble of Inspection, they would take your Word, that all was to your Purpose.

But I am not willing to part with them so; and since you have been pleased to mark them for us, I hope it may be no Offence to take an open View of them. The two first are thus,

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every Spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh, is of God.

And every Spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh, is not of God: And this is that Spirit of Antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already is in the World.

The two last are,

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: And every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.

These are your four silent Witnesses; and now we have taken the liberty to examine them, you will give me leave to observe, that it is the very last of them, before we find one Word or Syllable of *believing* so much as mentioned. You will say (perhaps) that *confessing* and *believing* are all one

one Thing: If you had said so in the very last Text you produced, I am sure then you had produced a Verse with *two Articles* in it, to prove your *one Article*: But the Apostle plainly distinguishes betwixt these Terms in that very Place; and I doubt not but you can tell us, that there is some distance betwixt *confessing* and *believing*, even to this very Day. However I should not have stood or wrangled about a small Postulatum or two, had it not been to one who always cries *Sophistry* and *Priestcraft* at such a Demand in other Persons.

But for once let *confessing* signify *believing*, and see what you will gain by the Device: That then which the two first of these Texts make necessary to be believed, is Christ's *Incarnation*, his human Nature, that he is *come in the Flesh* twice verbatim expressly repeated. As the two first had established the Article of his *Humanity*, the third requires us to acknowledge (or believe) his *Divinity*, that he is the *Son of God*. The fourth repeats his being *begotten of God*, and encourages us to believe his *Unction* or *Mission*, that he is the *Christ* or *Messias*.

Now I wish I could meet with an *Œdipus* to tell me, what could be in your Head in quoting the three first of these Verses! I hope they are of the same Authority with the fourth; if so, can you give the least Reason in the World, why I should not have the same regard to them, why they must not be my *Rule of Faith*, as well as the other? Why I ought not as well to believe that *Jesus Christ is God's only Son*, as *our Lord*; as well that he *was conceived of the Holy Ghost*, and *born of the Virgin Mary*, as that *he is the Messias*?

If you again plead, that these Articles are all comprehended and implied under the *Unum Magnum*; I again answer, that so is the whole Story of Christ crucify'd; so is every Article of our

Creeds: And if it be granted, that it is the Duty of a Christian to believe this *one great Article*, and that this one Article is to contain and include the whole Doctrine of Christ's Humiliation and Exaltation: If this be granted, I say, (as it has been pleaded) I challenge all the Adversaries of *implicit Faith*, to shew me a Reason, why every Teacher ought not to explain it, to resolve it into *distinct Propositions* (as is done in the Creeds) and thereby honestly to let their Hearers know, what they are obliged to swallow.

“ These and many more plain and direct Texts
 “ make only this Article necessary to be believed,
 “ and supersede all others. Nor is this required
 “ of us barely because it is true, or to gain adventitious Honour to the Deity, who wants not
 “ the Applause of poor mortal Men, for such Belief
 “ could signify nothing: But it was required
 “ of us to obtain Obedience to his Commands, and direct our Practice, to promote virtuous Actions, and the Principles that produce
 “ them. *John v. 24. Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my Word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting Life.* And
 “ Chap. viii. 31. *Jesus said to those Jews that believed in him, if ye continue in my Words, then are ye my Disciples indeed.* So that Faith in Christ
 “ is not enough, unless we obey his Word; or rather, we cannot be truly said to believe in him,
 “ whilst we reject his Commandments. First
 “ Epistle General of St. John, Chap. ii. 3, 4.
 “ *And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments: He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his Word, in him verily is the Love of God perfected: Hereby know we that we are in him.*

“ These

“ These with many more *plain* and *direct* Texts,
 “ make only this Article necessary to be believed,
 “ and supersede all others ”——Behold, Reader,
 and wonder! *Plain* and *direct* Texts! Is not such
 an Assertion as this enough to affright one? Is not
 such a Vaunt a *portenti simile* (as translated by an
 eminent Rabbi of the School of the Free-thinkers)
a such like Prodigy? How *plain*, how *direct*, or to
 whose Side of the Question your Texts have stood,
 I shall not dispute with you over again; but I be-
 lieve I might venture to submit to Judgment
 meerly upon your own Evidence.

Or if it be demanded of me to bring Scripture
 for the *Plurality* of Articles; I shall not lose Time
 to give it by Retail, but all in a Lump. *Every*
Proposition that a good Christian finds in the Word
 of God, he firmly believes in Proportion to the
 Evidence he has that it is God's Word. I own
 to the World, (and hope I have Reason so to do)
 that whatever is related of Jesus Christ in the New
 Testament, his *Doings*, his *Sufferings*, and his *Say-*
ings, is an *Article* of my *Faith*; because I have all
 the Assurance that the Nature of the thing will
 bear, that the said *Testament* is *true*. I am con-
 vinced that it was written by those holy and up-
 right Persons whose Names it bears; that it is
 safely derived to my Hands, as to every thing ma-
 terial, as it came from theirs; that those who
 wrote it had the Direction of God's *Wisdom*, as
 well as the Credentials of his *Power*. This Book
 therefore is my *Study* and my *Guide*, and what-
 ever I find asserted in it, I think it my Duty to
 assent thereto.

“ Nor is this required barely because it is true,
 “ or to gain adventitious Honour to the Deity,
 “ who wants not the Applause of mortal Men;
 “ but to obtain Obedience to his, and to direct

“ our Practice, to promote virtuous Actions and
 “ the Principles that produce them.

This extraordinary Sentence is plainly resolvable into these following Positions.

1. That *Truth* is of it self neither a *Good* nor an *Evil*; otherwise God might require us to *believe* this Article *barely because it is true*.

2. That God in giving Commands regards not his own *Glory*, or any *Honour* we can do him; otherwise this Article might have been injoin'd with a View to that *Honour* which is paid to God and his Veracity by every Person who upon *God's Word* believes it.

3. That one Motive of God's requiring this Article to be *believed*, is meerly the *Action* that such Belief naturally produces: I say, meerly the *Action*; because you have affirmed that God cannot receive *Pleasure* or *Honour*, and has no regard to the *Truth* or intrinsick Excellency of the Article; but that this Article is *required to promote virtuous Actions*.

4. That the other Motive of God's requiring us to believe this *one Article*, is to promote the Belief of *other Articles*; or, as you express it, *to promote the Principles* that produce virtuous Actions.

The first of these hopeful Positions of yours (after a Word or two) I shall leave to the Learned; to Metaphysicians; to such as are deep enough read and skill'd in the Nature of Invisibles to dispute with you. Only this I must observe, that our all-wise and good Creator has given us an innate Love and Desire after *Truth*; that he is often pleased to stile himself *the God of Truth*; that *Truth* is spoken of in his sacred Word as a *Virtue*, a *Treasure*, a *Blessing*, and as the just Object of our Ambition and Pursuit; that the more *Truth* we attain to, the greater is our *Resemblance* of the *God of Truth*, which *Resemblance* (as *Plato* observes) is

true

true Virtue; and in fine, that all the Exhortations to Knowledge and Wisdom (as well as the abundant Praises given them) in God's sacred Word, are all ultimately the Eulogiums of *Truth*; for what is *Knowledge*, or *Wisdom*, but a Discovery of, and an Adherence to, that *Divine Attribute*?

Your second Position (*that God in his Commands to Men regards not his own Honour*) is very consistent with your general Scheme, because (if it be put in good Hands to improve and make proper Inferences) it will exceedingly smooth and shorten the Business of Religion; 'twill ease us of the Trouble of *Worship*, and *Adoration*, and *Repentance* of those Sins, that some have esteemed a *Dishonour* to him; and save us the Charge of *building* or *adorning* the *Places* of his *Worship*, and providing for his *Ministers*. But how agreeable soever this may be to your Wishes, it is not so to the Truth. There is scarce a Book, either in the Old or New Testament, wherein the Almighty does not particularly insist on that *Worship*, *Honour*, *Praise*, and *Adoration*, that is peculiar to him. Whether he *wants* such an Applause or no, or what Good or *Pleasure* it may do to infinite Power and Perfection, is not for you or me to enquire; but it is enough for Mortals, for Worms and Dust, to know that it is *demanded*.

To give Quotations for that, which is every where so obvious, would be to affront a Christian Reader. We can none of us be ignorant that our God is always representing himself as a *jealous God*; one that requires us to know and *confess* his *Greatness* and *Majesty*, and one who will not *part with his Honour to any other*. How often are we told from his own Mouth, that the Judgments and *Prodigies* he wrought on *Pharoah*, were on purpose to get him *HONOUR on that Tyrant*, by his exemplary Destruction? Are we not expressly assured, that

the dreadful Vengeance manifested on *Herod* was for this very Reason, because *he gave not God the GLORY?* And did not Christ himself declare in so many Words, that the Sickneſs of *Lazarus* was for the GLORY of God?

One while does the Almighty preſs uſto pay him this Homage, and promiſes to *honour thoſe that honour him*; another while he expoſtulates with us on the *Reasonableneſs* of the Demand, *if I be a Father where is mine Honour, &c.* ? The whole Book of the *Pſalms* are Transports of Praise, and Divine Raptures inſpired by him who was the very Subject of thoſe unparallel'd Eulogiums: The Apoſtles conclude almoſt every Epiſtle with a pious Doxology: The Hymn ſung by immediate Meſſengers from Heaven began with, *Glory to God in the Higheſt*: One of the literal Precepts of the Son of God himſelf is to this End, that *Men may glorify their Father which is in Heaven*, and the very Prayer that he compoſed for the Uſe of his Elect is cloſed with this Acknowledgment, *For thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory, &c.*

Are you ſure then that God could have no regard to this his *beloved Honour* in his Impoſition of this Article? Are you poſitive he neither does nor requires any thing with reſpect to it? When you have taken ſecond Thoughts of this Matter I fancy your Confidence will begin to fail you. I flatter my ſelf that you will never more call the Worſhip of God a *flattering* our Maker; and I can hardly doubt but when you have found and conſidered the Multitude of Texts relating to God's *Praise*, his *Glory*, and his *Honour*, you will wiſh this ungracious *Position* of yours had never been born, and henceforth reject it as ſhameful, anti-chriſtian and ungodly.

Your third Poſition (that *God requires an Article to be believed merely for the ſake of the Action ſuch*

(*such Belief produces*) is also with great Caution to be admitted for the following Reasons.

First, Because, upon that Concession, the *Action* by it self would be good and *pleasing* to God, tho' it should proceed from no Principle, or never so bad ones. If the *Deed* was all that God regarded, the *Actions*, that are the effect of *Accident*, *Constitution*, or even *Malice*, may be religious *Actions*. This would turn the Grimaces of an *Hypocrite* into true Devotion; the Money that is scatter'd among the Poor by a Drunkard, or by a Courtier, would by this Means take the Name of *Charity*; and an Eunuch would have as good a Title to the Praise of *Chastity*, as *Joseph* himself.

The same *Action* may be *good*, *evil*, or *indifferent*, according to that *Motive*, from which it proceeds. 'Tis the *Motive*, I say, that gives the *Action* its moral Denomination; and for this Reason a *Cup of cold Water given to a Disciple*, or a *single Mite cast into the Treasury* (because done for God's sake), may be more precious in his Sight than *Talents and Hecatombs*.

You Place the main Substance of Religion in *Mercy* and *Beneficence* one towards another, and think there is little more to be done, because *God wants not the Applause of mortal Man*. Are we then to Measure our Duty by the *Wants* of our Creator——? How small a Task then is left us to perform? Alas! he as little *wants* our mutual *Beneficence*, as our filial *Piety*; and has no more need of our Assistance to support his Servants, than to exalt his Name! The whole Earth is his own, he *feedeth the young Ravens that cry unto him*; and a Word of his might turn *Stones into Bread*, *Water into Wine*, or *Dirt into Gold*, in behalf of his chosen. It is not then, that God is in *want* of any thing at our Hands, nor that he has Delight in the *meer Action*, that he lays his Divine Com-
mands

mands upon us; but to give us an Opportunity of manifesting our *Obedience*, and practising those *Virtues* he recommends to us; *which Obedience and which Virtue consist only in conforming our selves to his Will, and doing those Deeds that we think most acceptable and pleasing to him*, and for that very Reason because they are so. If we pretend there is *moral Goodness* in any Action, without this Respect to him that requires it; we may think that Highwayman that took away Money going to the Pretender, an excellent Patriot; the Raven that so long fed the Prophet, must on this score gain the Character of a very charitable and *religious Bird*; and the Dogs of *Dives* (and many such as he) are certainly by this Rule far better Christians than their Master.

Secondly, This Position is an utter Enemy to *Faith* and a good *Conscience*, and robs them of all the Virtue and the Praise attributed to them in God's Word. If God regardeth the meer *Action*, 'twas absurd in the Apostle to assign so much Efficacy to *Faith* only; to talk of Damnation for a little *Meat* eaten contrary to *Faith*; and to affirm that *whatsoever is without Faith is Sin*. It was this Divine *Grace* (before it had grown into any outward Action) that was the Medium of applying the Mercies of Christ to the distressed in the Gospel; it was meer *Unbelief* that interpos'd betwixt others and the same miraculous Deliverances; and our Lord himself informs us, that if we take *Faith* with us in our Addresses to the Father, nothing will be deny'd us. It is this inward *Belief* or Assurance of God's Approbation that is the very Essence of a good *Conscience*: This has the Power to make Schism, Disobedience, and Contention (tho' great Enemies to Peace, to Love, and to *social Happiness*) excusable in the Sight of God; and truly without this *Persuasion* of the Mind,

Mind, I fear you will go near to spoil your trusty Virtue of *Sincerity*, to cast away your poor *Gentiles*, and to hazard the Salvation of some more of your Friends.

Let us agree therefore (upon calmer Reflection) that the Articles of our Religion are proposed to our Belief, both because they are *true*, and because they conduce to the Glory of God, and stir us up to perform such Actions as will testify our Love, and our Submission to his Will; and let us assure our selves, that all *such Actions* are most acceptable to God, as built on his *Love*, and performed for his sake.

4. We come now to your fourth *Position* implied in the aforesaid noble Sentence; That God has yet *another Motive* for requiring us to believe this *one Article*, and that is its Aptness to *promote good Principles*——. Something has some Saviour——! You allow then that God would have us to hold divers *Principles*, tho' but one Article——! But I beg to know what are those *Principles*, and wherein the Principles of a Christian differ from his *Articles of Faith*?

Religious Principles are certain *Conclusions, Resolutions, or Maxims believed and adhered to as agreeable to the Will of God*——! If this be a just Definition of religious *Principles*, is it not also as just a Definition of religious *Articles of Faith*, and are not both the same with those very *Principles* that you here mean, as promoted by God by virtue of the *one Article*? If then *Articles* be *Principles*, and *Principles* be *Articles* to all Intents and Purposes; how can divers Principles be required, and yet but one Article; or how did our Maker require us to believe one Article or Principle, on purpose to promote other Articles or Principles, and yet not require us to believe those others? Is this the arguing of one who would illuminate and reform

reform the World? How do we trifle with him that created us, and what Proceedings are these we impute to infinite Wisdom? I could say more—, but your own Words most effectually do your Business; the *Independent Whig* is a Hero, that (like *Ajax*) scorns to fall by any foreign Hand!

The rest of this Paragraph is all Orthodox, to prove that *Obedience* and *Practise* is necessary as well as Faith——.

I hope you do not propose this to us as any *new Light*, or Invention of your own; and upon these Terms I bid you God-speed, and heartily wish every one of your Disciples may make *Application*.

Having demonstrated that *Faith* is nothing worth without Obedience, you proceed thus:

“ Let us therefore see what are those Com-
 “ mands, in the Observance of which Christiani-
 “ ty consists. It does not consist in the Obser-
 “ vance of Days, nor Months, nor Times, nor
 “ Years, *Gal. iv. 9. and Rom. xiv. 5. One Man*
 “ *esteemeth one Day above another, another Man*
 “ *esteemeth every Day alike: Let every Man be*
 “ *fully persuaded in his own Mind.*

“ It does not consist in Positive Institutions, in
 “ Forms and Ceremonies, *1 Cor. vii. 19. Cir-*
 “ *cumcision is nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing,*
 “ *but keeping the Commandments of Christ. And*
 “ *Gal. vi. 15. In Christ Jesus neither Circumcision*
 “ *avaieth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new*
 “ *Creature. Gal. v. 6. to the same Purpose.*

“ It does not consist in Meats nor Drinks, in
 “ Fish nor in Flesh, *1 Cor. viii. 8. Meat com-*
 “ *mendeth us not to God, for neither if we eat are*
 “ *we the better, nor if we eat not are we the worse.*
 “ *But take heed lest this Liberty of yours become a*
 “ *Stumbling-Block to them that are Weak. An*
 “ *Rom. xiv. 17. The Kingdom of God is not Meat*

^{te} and Drink, but Righteousness, and Peace, and
^{ac} Joy in the Holy Ghost.

I thought it best not to separate these three Paragraphs, because they are all to the same Tune; and because your *Positions* in them are so general, and so naked, both as to Argument, and Inference, that a few Words will be sufficient to remark on them altogether.

If then your Meaning be no more than that of the Apostle in the Words you quote; if you would only suggest, that the Dispensation of Christ is of a different Nature from that of *Moses*; that the *Christian Religion* consists not so much in *Shadow*, as in *Substance*; that it depends not on any particular Set of prescript *Ceremonies*; that it is not essentially concern'd with external *Forms* or Modes of Worship; that it does not elogg or incumber its Professors with the Use or Disuse of *Meats* or *Drinks*; that the Virtue and Efficacy of the Gospel is not founded on the ritual Observance of particular *Times, Days, Years, new Moons, Sabbaths, or Festivals*; but that we are freed by the Blood of Christ from legal *Sacrifices, Ordinances, and Ceremonies*; that every Church, or Society of Christians, are left at Liberty to settle and constitute Matters of this Nature in such Manner, as may best consist with spiritual *Liberty*, and best conduce to the moral Laws of *Charity, Edification, Decency, and Reverence*; I say, if this be all your Intention (as it is indisputably the Apostle's) God forbid I should oppose or gainsay.

But, if your Design be to infer or insinuate from these several Texts, that all Form and Ceremony whatever is utterly *unlawful* in the Christian Worship; that the Church has no right to order and constitute *Forms, Manners* or *Times* of the publick Exercise of Religion; and especially if by denying *positive Institutions* you have any View to deprive

deprive us of the *Sacraments*; I must beg the Liberty to dissent from you, and to give the following Reasons of such Dissention.

First, Because the two *Sacraments* are the *Ordinance of Christ*, in Words as plain and positive as could be invented; *This do in Remembrance of me: Go make Disciples of all Nations, baptizing them, &c.* Which sacred Institutions I look on as obligatory, and generally necessary to all Christians to the End of the World, because of the *moral Ends* annexed to the *Institutions* by Christ himself (the one is to *make Disciples*, to admit them into his Communion, his Church, his Body; the other is to put them in Mind what he has done for them, and expects from them, and to fix them to him by a grateful *Remembrance*.) Because the *Reasons* for observing these *Ordinances* are at least equally valid with respect to succeeding Ages, as they could be to the Apostles and first Christians; and because they became universally recommended, preſt and practised in those very Ages, which must be supposed to know the *Sense in which Christ understood his own Words* (as well as the Interpretations the Apostles put upon them) better than we can do at this great Distance.

Secondly, I dissent from you as to meer *Ceremony* also; and that, 1. Because it is actually impossible for Christians to communicate or assemble together, for the publick Worship of God, without the Appointment of Times and Modes of such Worship. This you your self have most generously declared in your 49th Paper, where you have bravely demonstrated the Expediency and Necessity of such ceremonial Establishments and Constitutions, both as to *Order, Time, Place, Ministry*, and a Right of *Excommunication*. Your Arguments in that Place are too long to be transcribed, too evident to be denied; wherefore I refer the Reader

to their Perusal, and you to their Remembrance, and leave you both to consider whether they are not a sufficient Answer to any thing *you* (at least) can say against Ecclesiastical Order or Discipline. 2. I cannot agree with you, that Ceremony is unlawful to Christians, because this very Apostle, whose Words you produce, himself gave several occasional Directions about these *external Matters*; and for the rest refer'd them to the *Customs of the Churches*, and commanded that all things should be done to *Edification* with *Decency* and *Charity*. Besides, the very Texts that are here brought by you to support this Intimation have no such Tendency. It is said indeed, that *the Kingdom of Heaven is not Meat and Drink*; and you rightly add, that Christianity consists not in *Days* or *Months*, in *Forms* or *Ceremonies*. But shall we thence infer, that no Day is to be set apart for God's Worship, no *Bread* or *Wine* made use of in the Sacrament; No *Modes* agreed on of *assembling* our selves together, or of our Carriage and Behaviour in such Assemblies? This Way of arguing would not be admitted in any other Case! Our Lord himself tells us, that his *Kingdom is not of this World*; but would it be thought a rational Inference, that therefore the Inhabitants of this World are not to obey his Commands? *Cucullus non facit Monachum*, is a proverbial Saying as true as if spoken by *St. Paul*; but would a Man of Sense produce it as a Proof that it is utterly unlawful for Monks to distinguish themselves by that Habit? If it should be resolved (*Nem. Cont.*) in a full Senate, that a *Surplice maketh not a Parson*; yet would not a Man be laught at, who should plead that *Resolution* to maintain the *Unlawfulness* of wearing the Surplice? *Loyalty* consists not in taking the Oaths of *Supremacy* and *Allegiance* (or else you have insinuated very hard Things against

against some Folks) yet surely you will not think it *unlawful* for Subjects to take those *Oaths*.

But to come to Scripture it self;—God tells the *Jews* by his Prophet *Isaiah*, that *Incense* was *Abomination*, and their *Sabbaths* and *solemn Meetings* an Offence; but does not every Child understand that it was the *Abuse* only of these things that he would have removed? *St. John* gives us this Admonition, *My little Children, let us not love in Word nor Tongue*; and yet I dare say, the most stiff Quaker will hardly carry this Text to the Prohibition of all *Professions* of Love and Friendship: And when our Lord himself expressly forbids us to *take Thought for the Morrow, to lay up Treasures on Earth, to invite our Brethren, or rich Neighbours &c.* I verily believe there is not a Man living, but understands these Prohibitions only in a comparative Sense: Why then shall we not take these Texts about ceremonial and *indifferent* Matters with the same Allowance? Why shall not Reason, Justice, and Necessity prevail with us to acknowledge, that the Aim of these Texts is not to *destroy*, but to *regulate* our Discipline; not to teach us that *human Ordinances* are *unlawful* and *sinful*, but only that they are to submit to Matters of *Weight* and *Moment*; that they are to be look'd on as things *indifferent, circumstantial* and *mutable*; that they are to give Place to the *Life* and *Substance* of Religion, Vertue and Charity, to *Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost*.

“ It consists not in long Prayers, nor in many
 “ Prayers, *Mat. vi. 7. When ye pray use not*
 “ *vain Repetitions, as the Heathens do; for they*
 “ *think they shall be heard for their much speak-*
 “ *ing. Be ye not therefore like them, for the*
 “ *Father knoweth what things ye have need of*
 “ *before ye ask.* Indeed it seems plain to me
 “ from this Text, as well as from the Reason of
 “ the

“ the thing, that Prayer it self becomes chiefly
 “ a Duty as it raises our Minds, by a Contem-
 “ plation of the divine Wisdom, Power, and
 “ Goodness, to an Acknowledgment of his re-
 “ peated Bounty to Mankind; and as it disposes
 “ us to an Imitation of those high Perfections,
 “ and to be merciful and beneficent to one ano-
 “ ther. For it is absurd to suppose, that we can
 “ direct the all-wise Being in the Dispensations
 “ of his Providence, or can flatter or persuade him
 “ out of his eternal Decrees. If therefore any
 “ Texts of Scripture seem to carry a contrary
 “ Implication, I conceive they ought to be un-
 “ derstood with the same Allowances as these are,
 “ which speak of God’s Hands and Feet, and of
 “ his being subject to human Passions.

It does not consist in long Prayers, nor in many Prayers.—To which let me add, It does not consist in short Prayers, nor in few Prayers——! Now what is the World the wiser for such ambiguous and uncertain Propositions?——But it is your *Way*, and the best *Way* of securing a *Retreat*.

When I shall be so happy as to know how far you would stretch this cautious Assertion; when you are pleased to signify, whether your Meaning be that *long Prayers*, or *many Prayers*, are *unlawful* and inconsistent with the Gospel; or that the Gospel requires somewhat besides *long* and *many Prayers*; or whether (as one might guess by the subsequent Harangue) the Reader is hereby to understand, that there is no direct Occasion of *Prayers at all*; that they are all to no Purpose, and but a sort of wheedling and *flattering* of a God who is not to be *moved* by them; I say, when I know the fixed Construction of these Words of yours, I shall very readily and sincerely tell you my Thoughts of them. In the mean Time I will grant more than you seem to demand! And that

is, that *Christianity does not consist in any Prayers whatsoever*; and I add farther, (to please you) nor yet in Preaching, nor yet in Thanksgiving, nor yet in receiving the *Sacraments*; nor yet in giving our *Goods to the Poor*, or our *Bodies to be burnt*: I say, it consisteth not in any of these single, no nor in all of them together as *meer Actions*; but in such a stedfast, warm, and lively *Faith in Christ crucify'd*, as will necessarily bring forth these and all other Marks of our Obedience, and irresistably ingage us to the Practice of these Duties under the Directions of Scripture, Occasion, and Discretion.

The Prohibition of our Lord here quoted by you (every body knows) relates to the many Babbings, Baulings, and Vociferations of the *Gentiles*; and the whole Verse is to convince us, that the Virtue of Prayer does not lie in loud speaking or numerous *Repetitions*; that such insolent *Clamours* can be of no *Use* in our Addresses to One, who knows our Wants, our Hearts, and Intentions; that therefore our Behaviour should be opposite to such; that our Petitions should be modest, spiritual, and rational; grounded on a Belief of God's Goodness and Mercy, and not in a Confidence in our own Loquacity or *much speaking*.

But should any one infer or insinuate from these Words, that *long Prayers*, or *many Prayers*, are an Offence to God, and contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel; I cannot but think him a very great Stranger to the Nature of both.

There is hardly a Book or Chapter in either Old or New Testament, but recommends to us the Continuance and Perseverance in this Duty; urges us to it, shews its Efficacy, and furnishes us with Arguments and Examples for dwelling and depending on it. And were it in it self true, that God's *Decrees are irreversibile*, yet, as the Design of
Prayer

Prayer is to testify our Humility, and Subjection; to manifest a Sense of our own Insufficiency, and our Maker's Sovereignty; to shew our constant Faith and Confidence in his Protection, and to stir us up to an *Imitation* of those *Perfections* we adore in him; I hope there is no Danger of our offending by the *Length* or *Multiplicity* of them: Always provided we do not work our Imaginations into a false Presumption upon their *Merit* or intrinsic Efficacy; if we see that our Hearts are not arrogantly puffed up, so as vainly to rely on their *Length* or *Number*, as Obligations on him to whom we address them; and that we do not consume so much of our *Time* in them, as to neglect the *moral Duties* of our several *Vocations* or Relations in the World.

I flatter myself, therefore, that there is no great Danger, that any humble and serious Christian should fall into this dreadful and *crying Sin* of long or many Prayers. However, so tender is your Regard to our Souls, that you are still in Pain for us! And therefore from this Reason of our Lord's, you proceed to give us a Reason of your own (and an extraordinary one it is), why we should beware of *too much praying*.

"It seems plain to me from this Text, as well
 "as the Reason of the Thing, that Prayer it self
 "becomes chiefly a Duty, as it raises our Minds
 "by a Contemplation of the divine Wisdom,
 "Power, and Goodness, to an Acknowledgment
 "of his repeated Bounties to Mankind; and as
 "it disposes us to an Imitation of those high Per-
 "fections, and to be merciful and beneficent one
 "to another.

Could any Man in the World, that does not hold the Senses of his own Party in perfect Captivity, and his Adversaries in Contempt, be the Author of such Reasonings? Here are fine Words,

'tis true; a flaunting Stile, and lofty Images; but what is it that they signify? What is the Lesson we are to learn by all this, when stript of the Plumes, the Colours, and the Disguise? What a Figure would this monstrous Argument make, if it were to stand naked in these Words?

“ My Beloved, your Religion consists not in long
 “ nor many Prayers! For the Use of Prayer is (you
 “ must know) to raise your Minds by thinking on
 “ God's Attributes to an Imitation of them: As
 “ sure then as such Imitation can be of very little
 “ Service to a Christian, so certain it is that using
 “ long or many Prayers, in order to raise your
 “ Minds to such a Contemplation and Imitation of
 “ God, is but a Waste of your Time and your
 “ Breath.

I appeal to any one, whether this be not the plain and natural Drift of this your extraordinary Argumentation: Yet for the Rarity and Delightfulness of the Object, I beg leave to behold it in another Light.

If the Reason, that is given to support a Proposition, be it self turned into a Proposition; that, which was before the Proposition, becomes then the Consequence: Let us therefore see how your Argument will look under this Disposition.—

“ Prayer raises our Minds by a Contemplation of
 “ God's Attributes to an Acknowledgment and Imitation of them, ergo, the Christian Religion
 “ cannot consist in long or many Prayers; it being a *Postulatum* never to be denied, that contemplating, acknowledging, or imitating the divine Attributes, is contrary to the Nature of
 “ the Christian Religion.

It is always my Way to reduce every Point of Doctrine into Practice; wherefore before I part with this admirable Sentiment of yours, I will make

make bold to turn your Position into that natural and necessary *Admonition* that is implied in it.

“ Let every good Christian beware of delight-
 “ ing too much in Prayer ! For by long and much
 “ praying your Heads will be apt to run upon his
 “ Perfections, whom you pray unto : And there
 “ is great Danger that such Thoughts may tempt
 “ you to a ridiculous Humour of *acknowledging*
 “ and *imitating* them.

These are your genuine Notions of Prayer !
 These are the just and true Lights in which their
 Beauty and Symmetry may be viewed ; and so ex-
 cellent are they in their Kind, that (without far-
 ther Descant) I shall leave them intire to the Ad-
 miration and Application of the Christian Reader.

“ For it is absurd to suppose, that we can direct
 “ the all-wise Being, &c. to the End.

This, with the rest of the Paragraph, is to
 support and strengthen the aforesaid Proposition ;
 and as it is asserted above, that Religion consists
 not in *long* or *many* Prayers, because the Use of
 Prayer is chiefly *Contemplation* on God ; so this
 Assertion maintains that Prayer is good for *nothing*
at all besides such Contemplation ; that it is absurd
 to suppose it can do us any other Kindness, obtain
 any thing for us, or persuade God to *alter his*
Decrees.

What Authority you have for making this mo-
 dest Declaration, or what Reasons to recommend it,
 you have not let us see : I shall therefore only need
 to observe, that it is in full Contradiction to all
 Religion both Natural and Revealed ; opposite to
 the Notions God himself has given us of his
 Mercy and Goodness ; and fatally bent to the Over-
 throw of Repentance and Humility, of divine
 Love, Hope in Christ, and Joy in the Holy
 Ghost.

I shall not stop to take Notice of an Absurdity of the grossest Kind implied in your Words, *viz.* *That God's Decrees are immutable by Prayer it self, but yet that they may be changed by the Effects of Prayer, Acknowledgment, and Imitation:* For to what end is such Acknowledgment, &c. recommended by you as a *Duty* of Religion, or as conducive to Salvation, but as it is a likely *Means* of prevailing on God to be reconciled to us, to pardon and bless us, which (at the same Time you say) *Prayer it self* is not?

Nor shall I pretend to undertake a Scrutiny of God's hidden and eternal Decrees, nor offer so much as to guess, how far they are binding either to himself or his Creatures: But this I am sure of, that this *Duty of Prayer*, and of *continuing* in it without *doubting, fainting, or ceasing*, is recommended to me over and over throughout the whole Scripture by God himself. I have frequent Examples of the Almighty's hearing and pitying Sinners, and *repenting* of the Evils or Judgments he had threatned: Our Saviour himself teaches us and exhorts us to *pray*, promises our Petitions shall not be *denied*; and spake a Parable to demonstrate the Power even of *Importunity* it self, to this very End, *that Men ought always to pray and not to faint.* And whatever Allowances you may please to crave for the Interpretation of these and a thousand other Places of Scripture, yet I will venture to close this Subject with the following *Pestulata*.

1. That the Almighty must needs know that his own Word would lead all Christians in general into a Belief of the *Usefulness* and *Efficacy* of Prayer.

2. That as he knew they would interpret the Scripture to this Purpose, so it was his Design they should so do.

3. That

3. That it is much more likely, that the *Independent Whig* should deceive himself, than that God should design to deceive his People.

“ It does not consist in Sacrifices performed in pompous Churches and magnificent Buildings, or in consecrated Trinkets. *Acts* xvii. 24, 25. *God that made the World and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of Heaven and Earth, dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands, neither is worshipped with Men’s Hands, as though he wanted any thing, seeing he giveth to all Life, and Breath, and every thing. Acts* vii. 48, 49, 50. *The most High dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands. Heaven is his Throne, and Earth is his Footstool: What House will ye build to me, saith the Lord, or where is the Place of my Rest? Hath not my Hand made all things?*

“ His Being is universal, not confined to Churches, Chapels, Choirs, nor Altars; but his Presence is every where alike, and not more immediately in one Place than another. *Acts* xvii. 27, 28, 29. *He is not far from every one of us, for in him we live, and move, and have our being, as certain also of your own Poets have said; for we are his Offspring; forasmuch therefore as we are the Offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like to Gold, or Silver, or Stone graven by Art, or Man’s Device.*

Was there ever Reformer who gave out his Doctrines in such loose and general Propositions? Did ever Oracle, Jesuit, or Gypsy, make Responses in such equivocal Terms? I ask you whom you write against, or what Sect or Party of Christians is there in the World, who will not subscribe these Articles of your Creed? *Christianity does not consist in Sacrifices performed in pompous Churches, &c. God’s Being is universal, not confin’d, &c.*

'Tis true you have transcribed Texts of Scripture, which by the Shew and Sound of two or three Words are to suggest *something* to your acute Disciples, which you are loth to assert! But you are to know that God has given us their Meaning, tho' you dare not; and whosoever will please to examine your Quotations, and consider them with the Context, and with other Places analogous to them; he will soon be convinced that they are only Admonitions of God's *Omnipotence* and *Omnipresence*, as also Cautions against Idolatry, Superstition, and low Conceptions of the Deity.

But seeing you have not ventur'd (in this Place) to tell us, what *Inferences* you would make for your *own Use*; nor how you would have your Readers understand you: Seeing you do not sagely conclude from these Sayings of the Apostles, That it is a Sin to worship God in any Place that has been called by these ungodly Names of TEMPLE, CHOIR, CHAPEL, &c. Seeing you do not affirm that it is manifest Idolatry to call on God in any House that is magnificently erected or consecrated to himself, or that was prophanely built by Art or Man's Device, or that has any Silver, or Gold, or graven Stone in all its Fabrick, or Furniture; and that therefore we ought immediately to pull down, and utterly demolish such impious Edifices; I say, seeing you have not here made these practical Uses of your Texts (tho' I wonder how they came to 'scape you) I shall leave these two Paragraphs whole and unmolested, 'till I can get a little more certain Information of their pious Intentions.

" The Almighty has no favourite Opinions,
 " Sects, or Nations. *Acts* x. 34, 35. And Pe-
 " ter opened his Mouth and said, Of a Truth I
 " perceive that God is no Respector of Persons; but
 " in every Nation, he that feareth God and worketh
 " Righteousness is accepted with him. *Rom.* ii. 11.
 " There

“ *There is no Respect of Persons with God.* Col.

“ iii. 11. *There is neither Greek nor Jew, Circum-*

“ *cision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian,*

“ *Bond nor Free, but Christ is all, and in all.* Gal.

“ iii. 28. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is*

“ *neither Bond nor Free, there is neither Male nor*

“ *Female; for ye are all One in Jesus Christ.*

Very well! all this must needs be true, for it is the Word of God. But what are we to learn by it? Why *that he has no favourite Opinions, Sects, or Nations*: And for the Meaning of this we must once more go to guessing.

’Tis pretty hard to conceive in what Sense *Opinion* can be ascribed to God, or how he can be said to favour an *Opinion*; because every thing with him is *Certainty*, and *all things are naked and open* before his Eyes. As he is too wise to doubt or waver in any thing himself, so he is also too just and good to countenance any thing but perfect Truth; which, I think, admits of no Degree of Comparison, and therefore cannot be more or less in his *Favour*.

But you need not be told that there is a Figure for this——! And saying that God does not favour any *Opinion*, is as much as to say, God does not favour the *Men* that hold that *Opinion*. I am yet to suppose, (for you have not told us) that by *Opinions* you here mean *Religious Opinions*, or in other Words, *Creeds* or *Articles of Faith*, and by *Sects* and *Nations*, those *Churches, Societies, or Assemblies*, that hold and profess such *Creeds* or *Opinions*; and that therefore at last your Intent is this, that *the Almighty does not favour any Person, Sect, Church, or Nation, more or less, for Matters of Belief or Articles of Faith*.

I have taken some Trouble, you see, to edify myself by this *mysterious Proposition*; and yet still I am in Suspense whether you lay it down as absolute
and

and universal, or only respectively, and under some tacit Limitation; that is, whether this perfect *Indifference* of God be affirmed with relation to all Mankind, so as *Jews, Turks, Pagans, and Apostates* may have the Benefit of it, or whether it be spoken only of the different Persuasions and Confessions among Christians. Wherefore to prevent all Manner of Mistake, I will set your Proposition in these two various Lights, and then *utrum horum*.

“ The Almighty has no Regard to any Difference of Opinion among Christians, nor does he in the least approve or disapprove any of them (single or associated) for their right or wrong Creeds, or Articles of Faith; but on Condition they call themselves Christians, or (in other Words) believe the *unum magnum*, the grand Preliminary that *Jesus is the Messiah*; as to all other Points they may believe or let it alone, 'tis all one, 'tis all one.

2. “ The Almighty has no Regard to any Belief or Opinion at all; nor does he more or less approve of any *Sett* or *Nation*, whether *Jew, Turk, Pagan, or Christian*, for their Faith or Principles.

I do not know of any Medium betwixt these two Interpretations of your Words; nor can I think of any other Sense that your Proposition may be fairly resolved into: I presume therefore that one of them you will be so generous as to father.

The latter of them, I should not so much as suspect of you, were it not for your high-flown Encomiums of *Sincerity*, and the mighty favourable Expressions with respect to *Gentiles*, which we meet with hereafter: But whether it be your Opinion or no, I must take the Liberty to dissent from your Position in this Sense of it, for the following Reasons.

1. Because

1. Because, if God has no Regard at all to Belief or Opinion, nor does more or less approve of any Person, Sect, or Nation, whether Jew, Turk, &c. I know not wherein we shall found the *Necessity* of our *one Article*, our *unum magnum*, our Basis, &c. that *Jesus is the Messias*. This Article may indeed be *necessary* to those who cannot believe otherwise; and so is another, viz. that the *Independent Whig is infallible*: But with no Propriety of Speech can it be affirmed, that One of these Articles is generally *necessary* and not the other; *unless the *Necessity* be founded in the Will and Approbation of God: So that all the holy Texts of Scripture, that you took the Pains to marshal together in Defence of this *one and sole Article*, are at once overthrown by this new Doctrine: And so far is it from being *necessary* to believe that *Jesus was sent by God*, that I can see no Benefit in so believing, since it brings me never a whit the nearer to the Grace or Favour of the *Almighty*.

2. By this Position, so understood, not only Faith but Revelation is vain; Truth is nothing, or nothing worth; to no purpose did the Son of God descend into the World; to evil purpose (meerly to deceive us) are all the Scriptures that tend to flatter us with Promises of Rewards to Believers; it was lost Labour in the Apostles of Christ, to leave their honest Trades, and spend their Days in distributing Truths, that the Hearers were never the better for; and little better than Knight-errantry was it in them, to lay down their Lives in Zeal to propagate those *Doctrines*, without which God might have been as well pleased by the Principles of meer *Natural Religion*, or by none at all: For

3. Upon this Ground we may quit even the Principles of *Natural Religion*, and yet stand as highly in our Creator's Favour (like Stocks or Cabbage-stumps)

stumps) as the wisest Philosopher of them all. *The Almighty has no favourite Opinions, nor value any one for Faith or no Faith!* Wherefore give Ear, O ye sincere Infidels, ye Scepticks, and Atheists! Take Care of your *Practice*, and do not rob Hen-roosts, and as for the rest, I dare promise you, your (honest) Principles will never hurt you.

But if you rather choose to stand by your Proposition in the former Construction, *viz.* that *God has no Regard to any other Opinion or Belief, so we be but named Christians, or do but assent to the one Article*: I beg leave to presume this is little more than a vain Repetition of what you had so often affirmed, and to which you have received so many Answers before, *viz.* That *there is but one Article in all this Religion necessary to be believed*. Thus have you the constant Faculty of teasing your Readers with Variety of Phrases, without the Ex-
 pence of any new Thought!

However, the farther you proceed on this Point, your Absurdities still grow and increase upon you. — In the Beginning of the Chapter you thought it enough to say, that *God did not require above one Article*; but in this Place *he is not so much as pleased with us for believing any other*. — In the first Place *one Article was requisite and necessary*; but by and by *Sincerity will do as well without it*. — Formerly we were to *believe in Jesus in order to take his Word*; but the Time is now come, that whether we take it or not, it is no odds, *God has no favourite Opinions*.

Thus do you go on to confound and intangle your self and Readers in eternal Contradictions; and upon the whole, there is nothing that we can certainly conclude from all these *blind Mazes* and *studied Intricacies*, but that you have undertaken to propagate your Sentiments to others, before you
 know

know what they are your self ; and that you have not the least Insight into the Meaning of those *Texts* you produce to support them.

For how else could you have been induced to name so many Places of Scripture, to prove that *God has no favourite Opinions*, which are the clearest and most direct Evidence in the World of his particular *Favour* towards those who *believe* the Doctrines of his Son ? How could you bring in these holy Witnesses to maintain that all Sects, Parties, Nations, and Persuasions are equal in God's *Approbation*, without any respect to their *Faith*, when it is clearer than Sun-shine, that this *Approbation* is principally *with respect* to their Faith ? The unavoidable Meaning of your numerous Authorities here introduced is, that the *Almighty is no Respector of Persons*, on Account of any *worldly Considerations*, in regard of *Country, Sect, Condition, Vocation, Parentage, Sex, or Denomination*, so they become faithful Disciples of Christ : That the Meek and Upright in all Times and Places are alike intitled to the Privileges of Christianity, and alike in *God's Favour* if they heartily embrace it : That he accepts of no *Opinion* or *Belief*, but through its Conformity to the Gospel of his Son ; nor esteems of any *Person, Sect, or Nation*, but according to the Measures of their Disposition to receive, adhere to, and practice, the inestimable *Treasures* of divine Wisdom revealed by the *Messias*.

For as to what St. *Peter* said to *Cornelius*, and the rest there assembled ; if we read the whole Story, 'tis notorious that it was this *Gospel Disposition*, this *Christian Frame* of Mind that prevailed on God to communicate the Light of the Gospel, and the Benefits of the Christian Covenant to that honest Man : And methinks no body should venture to deny, but God's working more

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than

than one Miracle to bestow the *Christian Faith* on this worthy Gentleman, is at least a presumptive Argument, that there is some special Blessing and Privilege annexed to this *Faith*.

The Text to the *Romans* is as directly to our Purpose; where St. Paul is mortifying the conceited *Judaizers*, telling them that it is not their boasted Law, but their Faith, and Practice of the *Christian Doctrines* that must save and justify them; that by the Christian Covenant (of *Faith* and Repentance) the *Gentiles* were equally with them intitled to Pardon and Redemption; that there is no Respect of Persons (or Nations any longer) with God; but that both Parties of Christians (*Jews* and *Gentiles*) shall be try'd by the same Rules, on the same Articles in the Day when God shall judge the Secrets of Men according to his Gospel.

That to the *Colossians* is yet plainer; where the Apostle tells them that God hath regard to no Circumstance or Condition of Life, but only to *Faith* and Obedience in Christ. That there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, &c. but Christ is all in all.

To prove that his Meaning to the *Galatians* is the same, I need only to transcribe his Words: *Ye are all the Children of God by Faith in Christ Jesus, & 26. And & 28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, &c. For ye are all one in Christ Jesus; and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's (faithful Abraham's) Seed and Heirs according to the Promise.*

Thus it is manifest from a just Examination of your own Evidence, that there is not the least Ground for your Assertion (in any Sense whatsoever) that God has no favourite Opinions. The Texts you offer do not once mention, nor so much as hint at any particular Opinions, or Tenets, among Christians; but they undeniably prove, that your *Seeds* and

and *Nations* cannot be in God's *Favour*, 'till they have quitted their *Opinions* and *believe* in Christ. This, I say, is the full Purport of your own Texts, and the constant Tenour of the New Testament. We are every where taught, that the Gospel is the *Standard* by which we are to be all tryed; that the Almighty does not accept the Person of any Man, but for the sake of his Son; that a Christian Temper, and an Adherence to the Principles of the Gospel, is what will best recommend us to the divine Approbation; that his Frowns or Favours have no other Measure but Faith and Obedience to his *Only Begotten*.

But after all that has been offered, if you will still think *your self concerned* to infer from these divine Declarations, that it is no Matter what *Opinions* a Man has or holds, so he be but a *Christian* in the *one Article*; you should first inform us why our blessed Lord and his Apostles taught us so many Articles and Opinions; to what End so many Epistles were written to the Churches to regulate, reform, direct, and increase their Faith; and why those holy Men so vigorously wrestled to establish *Truth*, to remove *Error*, to discountenance *Heresy*, Contention, and Division, and to promote *Unanimity*: You should explain to us (if all Opinions are alike) to what End the holy Spirit so earnestly exhorts us not to be *deceived*, to beware of *Seducers*, to shun *Philosophy* and *vain Deceit*; and what is the Design of these frequent Admonitions, to *obey the Truth*, to keep up the *Form of sound Words*, and from the *first Principles* (or *Preliminaries*) of the *Doctrines of Christ*, to *go on unto Perfection*. We would know also, (if so little be to be learnt) in what Sense the *holy Scriptures* are said to be *able to make us wise unto Salvation*; or you might put an End to this whole Controversy, by giving us a Paraphrase (your Talent being so excellent in

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that

that Art) on St. Paul's two Epistles to Timothy, or but on the following Verses.

Hold fast the Form of sound Words, which thou hast heard of me in Faith and Love, &c.

That good Thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost, &c.

The things that thou hast heard of me among many Witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful Men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Study to shew thy self approved unto God—— rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

But shun profane and vain Babblings, &c.

Foolish and unlearned Questions avoid, knowing that they gender Strife.

And the Servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle——apt to teach, &c.

In Meekness instructing those who oppose—— if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth;

That they may recover themselves out of the Snare of the Devil.

In the last Day perilous Times shall come:

For Men shall be Lovers of their own selves, covetous, Boasters, proud, Blasphemers, disobedient to Parents, unthankful, unholy.

Without natural Affection, Truce-breakers, false Accusers, incontinent, fierce, Despisers of those that are good.

Traitors, heady, high-minded, Lovers of Pleasures more than Lovers of God.

Having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power thereof; from such turn away.

For of this sort are they which creep into Houses, &c.

Ever learning, and never able to come to the Knowledge of the Truth.

Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the Truth.

But they shall proceed no farther, for their Folly shall be manifest unto all Men, &c. But

But evil Men and Seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, &c.

All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, &c.

That the Man of God may be perfect, &c.

The Time will come when they will not endure sound Doctrine, but after their own Lusts, &c.

And they shall turn their Ears from the Truth, and shall be turned unto Fables.

But watch thou in all things, &c.

These Verses, I say, however they may have been thought in former Times to imply a great Difference betwixt *Truth* and *Error*; betwixt a stedfast Adherence to the Doctrines of the Gospel, and a giddy or petulant Inclination to *Novelty*: Yet, by a little of your usual Management, will easily make out the clear contrary, and turn against themselves; if you say but the Word, they will readily maintain, that *God has no favourite Opinions*; that he has no Pleasure in any Man for his Articles of *Faith*, for *believing* the Discoveries that himself has made us: Besides, I must tell you, here will be rare Matter for you to declaim upon! These Texts will afford you such tragical Words as will fill your Mouth, and adorn your Pages; here is Work for your Invention, to declare to us to whom these Titles of *false Accusers, Despisers, Traitors, Boasters*, and *Seducers* belong; and in whom these Predictions of the Apostle are fulfilled!

“ How therefore shall we worship him, how
 “ know his Will? St. John tells us, Chap. vii.
 “ v. 16, 17. *If any Man will do his Will, he will*
 “ *know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God or*
 “ *no*: That is as much as to say, Make use of
 “ the Judgment which God has given you, and
 H “ see

“ see whether the Doctrine taught you be worthy
 “ of an Omnipotent Author; see whether it
 “ teaches Peace and Love to your Neighbour,
 “ Compassion to all in Distress, Forbearance of In-
 “ juries, Humanity and Indulgence to all who
 “ differ from you; Duty to Parents, Submission
 “ and Obedience to the Laws of your Country,
 “ and Charitableness and Benevolence to all Man-
 “ kind, and even to the Brute-Creation; then you
 “ may be sure such Doctrines come from God.
 “ But if it breaths forth Revenge and implacable
 “ Hatred; if it raises Mobs, Civil Wars, and
 “ Persecutions for trifling Opinions; if it has for
 “ its End Ambition and worldly Pride, and over-
 “ turns every thing sacred and civil which stands
 “ in its way; if it encourages the worst Men and
 “ oppresses the best; if it discourages Industry and
 “ depopulates Nations; then there are plain Traces
 “ of Satan’s, or the *Popish* Priest’s Foot in it, and
 “ such a Religion can never come from God.

Behold, Reader, and admire at a new and un-
 parallel’d Specimen of Sincerity and Ingenuity! I
 defy the *Vatican* to produce its Equal, or to shew
 me such a Talent at expounding Scripture! Did
 ever the most bigotted, the most *red-hot Zeal*, in-
 gendring with *Priestcraft*, bring forth such a *mon-
 strous* Prevarication, and Corruption of a Text of
 God’s Word? What sort of Readers you thought
 you were likely to be concerned with, or what was
 your Motive for such a glaring Imposition on com-
 mon Sense, I will not offer to determine; but I
 am well assured you would laugh at any one who
 should be so stupid as to swallow it——! Such a
 Genius as yours, can make any Text in the whole
 Bible, stand forth for the Proof of any Assertion.

But is it not here most evident, (what I have
 long been thinking), that the *Concordance* is the
 only Author you apply to for Maintenance of
 your

your Doctrines? When you have devised a Theme in Opposition to *received Opinions*, the Interest of the *Church*, or religious *Establishments*, you harangue upon it with a Torrent of Wit, and an Air of Reasoning peculiar to your self; and when by these Fascinations you have possessed the Reader, and left him nothing but Eyes and Ears, then comes the Concordance, and so the Argument is riveted, the Subject closed, and the Convert fixed, by the Shew and Sound of a Text of Scripture. This is your way through this whole Volume: I would not say it, had I not plenty of Instances by me to produce upon Demand.

However your *Oracle* was honest and plain with you in this Place, had you not spoiled the Evidence by this strange Comment. The Answer was direct, had you thought it convenient to abide by it. The Question ask'd by you was, *How we shall know God's Will?* The Answer made you is, *By doing it;* that is, honestly practise what thou knowest, and that is the way to know more: Fulfil his *Commands*, and he will reveal to thee his *Doctrines*, as he did to *Cornelius*. The *Meek will he guide in judgment: In all thy Ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy Paths: If any Man do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrines, &c.* These Words are so plain and direct, so remote from the least Air of Doubt, or Controversy, that 'tis strange any Man should offer to impose them on the World in any other Sense! Had you but looked into the Chapter you could not have done it; you would have seen at first Glance that your own very Question is there asked, that these Words are (by good Fortune) a direct Answer to it, and moreover given in such a Tense, as to render their Meaning fixt and certain, and to make them obnoxious to no Mistakes but such as are wilful.

The Quere there is how Jesus came by such extraordinary Knowledge, having never learnt?

The Answer he makes himself, (not St. *John*) That this Knowledge and Doctrine was from God; and that any of them might attain to it by the same Means, *by doing his Will*.

Why then is this simple Text so wrested and confounded? To what End is this amazing, this unheard of Paraphrase? What Grounds could these plain Words afford you, whereon to build this hideous Declamation about *Ambition* and *Pride*, *Mobs* and *Persecutions*, *Oppressions* and *Depopulations*, the *Traces* of *Satan* and the Pope's Toe? May we demand your *Authority* for altering the Translation from *shall* know to *will* know; or may we ask you, (if it were to be so translated) by what Laws of Sense or *Grammar*; by what Propriety of Speech, or by what Example of *Authors*, you can make it support this affected Exposition? I have labour'd an hundred Ways to find out your Chain of Thinking, (if you had any Thought) when you wrote this Paragraph; but I am still at a loss with what Design (*shall*) is changed into (*will*): By what Rule a Future-Tense is here varied into an Imperative Mood; with what Face God's Words can be turn'd against him, and what he is pleased to promise as a Reward to Obedience, audaciously changed into a prudential Rule, whereby to try his own Revelations. *If any Man obey God's Will, he shall be assisted to understand it*, saith Christ. That's as much as to say, Before any Man will obey God's Will, *he will try it by its Merits, and see whether it agrees with his own Notions* (quoth the Independent Whig). Sure never was the Almighty, his Will, and his Word, so contemptuously handled!

“ When you have made this your best Use of the
“ Faculties God has given you, your Endeavours
“ will

“ will certainly be accepted by him; and you will
 “ meet with all the Reward that attends the judg-
 “ ing right, since you have done all in your Power
 “ to do so: For God puts upon no Men the *Egyp-*
 “ *tian* Task of making Bricks without Straw;
 “ nor requires any thing which they cannot per-
 “ form. *Rom. ii. 10, 11. Glory, Honour, and*
 “ *Peace to every Man who worketh good to the Jew.*
 “ *first, and then to the Gentile; for as many as*
 “ *have sinned without Law, shall be punished with-*
 “ *out Law; and those that have sinned in the Law,*
 “ *shall perish by the Law. And v. 14, 15. For*
 “ *when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do*
 “ *by Nature the things of the Law, they are a Law*
 “ *unto themselves: Which sheweth the Work of the*
 “ *Law written in their Hearts; their Conscience also*
 “ *bearing them Witness; and their Thoughts the mean*
 “ *while accusing or excusing one another.*
 “ So that the Gentiles themselves are to be
 “ judged by their Sincerity, and not condemned
 “ for involuntary Errors. *Rom. xiv. 10, 11,*
 “ *12, 13. Why dost thou judge thy Brother? As*
 “ *I live saith the Lord, every Knee shall bow to me,*
 “ *and every Tongue shall confess to God: So then eve-*
 “ *ry one of us shall give an Account to God. Let*
 “ *us not therefore judge any more. And v. 22. We*
 “ *are told who will be judged to Happiness, Hap-*
 “ *py is he who condemneth not himself in that thing*
 “ *which he alloweth. 1 Epistle General of St. John*
 “ *Chap. iii. 21. Beloved, if our Hearts condemn us*
 “ *not, then have we Confidence towards God.*
 “ *Cornelius, tho’ a Heathen, is commended in*
 “ *Acts x. 2. as a devout Man, and one that feared*
 “ *God with all his House, which gave much Alms*
 “ *to the People, and prayed to God always. And*
 “ *Lydia a Seller of Purple, tho’ neither a Jew nor*
 “ *a Christian, is said to be a Worshipper of God,*
 “ and one whose Heart God had opened before

“ he heard the preaching of *Paul*, Acts xvi.

“ 14.

I have given a View of these three Paragraphs together, because they are all on one Subject, jointly to support your Notion of Sincerity; that God has no favourite *Sects* or *Opinions*; and to maintain the Assertion in the first of these three Paragraphs; that *when you have done your best, you will meet with all the Reward that attends the judging right.*

The Bishop of B——r has given Occasion for the handling and clearing this Controversy, in a Manner so full and satisfactory, that it would be Vanity in me to pretend to add much on that Subject. Yet for the sake of such as may think you have seen farther into the Matter than that sagacious Prelate, or may be apt to fancy the Doctrine more probable, for that it cometh forth in Company with so many Texts of Scripture; I must beg you to favour me with a Word or two, both upon the *Doctrine*, and the *Proofs* by which you seem to countenance it.

This then I take to be your general Position; That *Sincerity only is what all Mankind is to be judged by*; that no Regard is to be had in another Life to those *Creeds* or *Opinions*, whether most right or most wrong, we have sincerely entertained in this; but that if we make the best Use of the Faculties God has given us, tho' the Issue be in never so many or gross Errors, yet we *shall meet with all the Rewards that attend the judging right.*

This is the fair and just Construction of your Words on this Point, unless they have no Construction at all: For there can be no Medium or Mitigation in the Matter; but if a sincere *Turk*, or even *Atheist* is intitled to *all the Rewards of judging right*, a sincere *Christian* can have no more than

than he. You will say perhaps, there cannot be a sincere *Atheist*. But why dost thou judge thy Brother? I may think perhaps that there cannot be a sincere *Deist*, or *Independent Whig*. But we have no Measure of other Men's Gifts, Judgments, or Abilities; nor can you and I say, but they who do assent to, and imbrace the grossest Errors, or the most abominable Absurdities, may sincerely *think* themselves to be in the *right*; nor can we affirm it more injurious to the Creator, sincerely to *doubt* or *deny* his Being, than to think it like unto *Stock* or *Stone*, to *Dogs*, *Swine*, or *Serpents*.

For the Support of this your modish Divinity, you have not favoured us with one Argument of your own (so much wiser than those who have gone before you) but wholly trusted to your old Friend the *Concordance*; which has done indeed its best for you, and given you many Testimonies in Sound, tho' not one in Substance.

The first of these is *Rom. ii. 10, 11, 12. Glory, Honour, and Peace to every Man who worketh good to the Jew first, &c.* I am obliged to tell you in plain Terms, that these Texts of *St. Paul* are nothing to your Purpose; nor have they the least Eye to *Sincerity of Belief*, unless it be to *they* (what I shall never gainsay) that *Belief* is of no Use without Obedience and Conformity of Practice: And I desire you take Notice that wherever the whole Context mentions *Faith* or *Belief*, it is mentioned as *necessary* with Regard to *Christ*, and to *Christ* only; and as acceptable to God, or efficacious towards Salvation on no other Account. It is impossible for Words to make this plainer, than it is set forth by the Apostle himself in this Epistle; And let any impartial Person carefully peruse but only the four first Chapters of it, and I assure my self he will never expect a farther Proof.

that there is a wide Difference betwixt a sincere *Belief* and a sincere *Unbelief* in Christ Jesus.

But what is the Argument you would make of these Words, *Glory, Honour, &c.*? You have here indeed the several Names of *Jew* and *Gentile*; but you can hardly be ignorant (whatever you would have your Disciples to be) that they only signify in this Place the two different *Parties* of Christians. As Converts were made, and Churches gathered both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*; so I believe it will be granted, that it was not to the *Roman Senate* or *People*, but to *Converts* and to the *Church of Rome* that this Epistle was directed. The Words of the Apostle are, Chap. i. 7. *To all* (without Distinction) *that are at Rome called to be Saints*. And a little after he gives them an Account of his Business, and the Nature of it; *ŷ. 15. I am ready to preach the Gospel to you at Rome, &c. ŷ. 16. It is the Power of God unto Salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek or Gentile.*

The Reason the Apostle here makes Use of this Distinction of *Jew* and *Gentile*, is because these two Parties of Christians were always disputing, contending, judging, censuring, and condemning one the other; and it is plain he uses it only to remove it; to reconcile them one to the other upon Consideration of their *common Faith*, their *common Salvation*, (Chap. iii. 22, &c.) their *common Right to God's Favour*; they being all in a spiritual Sense the *Sons of Abraham*, and *Children of the Promise* (Chap. iv. 11, &c.). The *Jews*, 'tis true, have the *Precedence* given them, as being the natural *Seed of Abraham*, and antiently in Covenant with God; and therefore is it said, *To the Jew first, &c.* Chap. iii. 1, &c. But as *both* were Believers, both Converts to Christianity, both Members of the one Head Christ Jesus, so no real
(Chap.

(Chap. iii. 22.) Difference was to be made betwixt them; the one was to be *justified by Faith*, and the *other thro' Faith* (Chap. iii. 30.); both were intitled to the Rewards of Christ, if they conformed their Actions to their holy Vocation; *Glory, Honour, &c. to them that do good, &c.*

But suppose it were granted you, that these Words were written of the *Jews* and *Gentiles* as such, without Respect to the Faith of Christ; what then is the Inference? The most that it argues is, that God requires every sort of Men to make the best Use of the Talents committed to them; that they who *commit Sin* upon any Principle whatever, are *without Excuse* (Chap. i. 18, 19, 20, &c.); that all People that have led wicked Lives, will be condemned, even upon their own Principles (Chap. ii. 2.); that if the *Jews* and *Gentiles* committed Abominations in Opposition to the Law of *Moses*, and the Dictates of natural Reason; this *Law*, and those *Dictates* shall rise in Judgment against them: But if they walked by the best Rules that Heaven afforded them; which before the Gospel were the Law of *Moses*, and the Light of *Nature*; if they honestly study'd, improved, attended to, and obeyed these, whilst there were no better to be had, they shall not lose the Wages of Obedience: God will render *Glory, &c.* to them that do good, whether *Jew* or *Gentile*: But how this is a Proof that such *Jew* or *Gentile*, after hearing and rejecting the Gospel of Christ, shall be intitled to *this Reward*; or that this Reward (were it obtained) shall be *all the Reward* of a faithful and pious Christian; I have not Eyes to see.

Will you please then to make your own Choice, in what Character to receive these Strangers in your Text.

If you look on them as real *Jews* and *Gentiles*, the Meaning of the Apostle must stand thus :

Every one shall be dealt with by God according to his *Deeds* : Those who have patiently submitted to his Providence, and sought in their several Stations and Circumstances, the Honour of their Creator, shall have Life eternal. But those who have given their Minds to *Contention*, who have not peaceably followed the *Lights* that their Maker afforded them ; but neglected the Discoveries, and resisted the Mandates of *Law* or *Conscience* ; must expect to be paid with *Indignation* and *Wrath*, *Tribulation* and *Anguish*, every *Soul* of them, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*. But for the *Virtuous* and *Good*, of whatever Denomination, they shall have *Glory*, *Honour*, and *Peace* : As they have never had the Offer of Christianity, they shall not be punished as guilty of rejecting it. They shall be called to Account for no other Talent than that they have received ; for God is not a *humourous* or *capricious* Respector of Persons ; but will impartially try every one according to the *Dispensation* under which they have lived. The *Heathens*, that sinned *without* a written Law, shall perish without Consideration had to the written Law : The *Jews*, who sinned *in* and *against* the Law, shall by that Law be condemned : But neither of them shall be liable to an Indictment for want of *Faith in Christ* crucify'd, because they had never the blessed Privilege of seeing his Life, or hearing his Word.

On the other Side, if you please to admit that these *Jews* and *Gentiles* were all Christian *Converts* (which you must admit, or else you do them great Injury), the Sense of the Apostle is plainly this :

My Beloved in Christ, God will render to every one of you, by whatever Parties you distinguish your selves, according to your *Deeds*. If you go on to be *factious*, *contentious*, *sceptical*, and do not
obey,

obey, or (as the Independent Whig translates the Word) be not *persuaded* by the *Truth* of the Gospel; you must expect the severest Punishments imaginable (*Indignation*, &c.), whether you be *Jewish* or *Gentile* Professors. On the other Side, if you work that which is *good*; if you be *obedient* to God, and *charitable* to your Neighbours, you are each intitled to the inestimable *Rewards* which Christ hath purchased for true Believers (*Glory*, *Honour*, &c.): For *there is no Respect of Persons with God!* 'Tis not the Title of *Jew* or *Gentile* will signify any thing towards his Favour; Christ hath made you all *one*, the Children and *Heirs* of the *Faith* of *Abraham*: And even before this gracious Dispensation, tho' the *Jews* were only in *Covenant* with God; yet the upright *Gentiles* who had only the *Light* of *Reason* to guide them, shall not lose the *Rewards* of *Innocence* and *Virtue*; but both *Jews* and *Gentiles* shall be try'd by the Dispensations under which they served. As many as have *sinned without Law*, shall also *perish without Law*; and as many as have *sinned in the Law*, shall be judged by the *Law*.

I know not any third Interpretation that can be given of these Words; and which ever of the two you will stick by, you will be forced to acknowledge it not at all to your Purpose. You know this long before now, and therefore are the Texts sily transcribed without the least Annotation or Inference, and the Reader is left to suppose it an Argument because it is yours. But I appeal now to a *sincere Jew*, whether there is any thing in those Verses to the *Romans*, that gives him any Title to the *Christian Salvation*. Nay, I appeal to an honest *Gentile*, a *Pagan*, or *Free-thinker*, (if he will but take the Pains to read this Epistle) whether there is one Expression that gives him the least Hopes, that he shall fare as well by believing Christ

Christ an *Impostor*, as by believing his *Mission*, his *Word*, and *Promise*. But what would he say if he should read the many Texts that are (as if purposely to prevent such pernicious Inferences) directly to the contrary? How often is it asserted, that all the Hope both of *Jew* and *Gentile*, is in *Christ only*, and *only thro' Faith* in his Name? To what End is it affirmed, that the *Gospel of Christ is the Power of God unto Salvation, unto every one that BELIEVETH, to the Jew first, &c.* Chap. i. 16. ? That the *Righteousness of God is revealed from FAITH to FAITH*, and that the *Just shall Live by FAITH*, *ψ. 17.* That the *Righteousness of God is manifested by FAITH of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that BELIEVE*, Chap. iii. 21, 22. That *Sinners of all sorts, both Jews and Gentiles, are justified freely by his GRACE, (ψ. 24.)* through the Redemption in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a *PROPITIATION* through *FAITH* in his Blood: To declare his *Righteousness for the Remission of Sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: To declare at this Time his Righteousness, that he might be Just, and the Justifier of him that BELIEVETH in Jesus, ψ. 25, 26.* The Meaning of which three last Verses is indisputably this; that though Works of Morality and Obedience are never to be dispensed with, yet these we are not to depend upon for *Justification* and *Salvation* (for no Obedience can be perfect), but only upon *FAITH* in Christ, who is set forth a *Propitiation* through *FAITH* in his Blood, for the general *Remission of Sins*; I say the general Remission, seeing there is but one God both of *Jews and Gentiles, ψ. 29.* the Justifier of him (whatsoever Party he be of) that *BELIEVETH in Jesus, ψ. 26.* The Justifier of the *Circumcision by FAITH, and the Uncircumcision through FAITH, ψ. 30.*

If you have not yet enough of this Subject, I will add a Verse or two of the fourth Chapter. Here we are informed that *Abraham BELIEVED God, and it was counted unto him for Righteousness, v. 3.* That to him that *WORKETH not, but BELIEVETH on him that justifieth the UNGODLY, his FAITH is counted for RIGHTEOUSNESS, v. 5.* That *Abraham received the Sign of Circumcision, a Seal of the Righteousness of the FAITH he had before Circumcision, that he might be the Father of all them that BELIEVE, that Righteousness might be imputed to them also, v. 11.* That the Righteousness so imputed to Abraham was not written or recorded for his sake alone, but for us also to whom it shall be imputed, if we (also) BELIEVE on him that raised up Jesus, &c. v. 22, 23, 24.

If you are not yet satisfied, look but to the first Words of the fifth Chapter, or any other Part of the Epistle where this Subject is mentioned, and you will every where meet with the like shining Testimonies against the Doctrine of *Merits*, and the Opinion that a *good Life is all in all*, tho' accompanied with never so bad a *Belief*. Not that any thing is said to deprive *Virtue* of its just Commendations; nor is *Morality* ever omitted, or in the least slighted by the Pen-Men of God's Word; but as we are told on one Hand, that a good Action loses good Part of its Commendation, if it be not the Offspring of *Faith*, and done *for God's sake*; so we are assured as well on the other Side, that that only is true *Faith* that is fruitful in good Actions; *that Faith without Works is dead.*

However we are to know, that our own Righteousness (carry it as high as we can) is not sufficient; that our *Works* cannot intitle us to the Rewards of Christ, because they cannot be perfect; that our *Reward is to be reckoned of Grace and not of Debt*, Chap. iv. 4. That our Salvation is of
FAITH,

FAITH, *that it may be of Grace, &c. 16.* that is; that we may thankfully receive it as a *free Gift*; that we may not pretend to glory in our Works; that we may gratefully ascribe our Redemption to that blessed Person who did for us, who *was delivered for our Offences, and raised again for our Justification, &c. 25.* I will wind up this Argument with these plain Questions.

1. Whether the Apostle in these Chapters does not ascribe some special *Privilege* to *Faith* in Christ?

2. How those who are not qualified with this Faith, can stand *intitled*, I say, *intitled* to those *Privileges*?

I would ask also,

1. Whether St. Paul be in the right in teaching us, that the *good Works*, growing out of a *sincere Belief* in Christ, are not *perfect*, and sufficient to intitle us to Salvation?

2. How the *good Works* growing out of sincere *Infidelity*, can be more *meritorious*, and sufficient to intitle us to that Salvation which the other cannot do?

Your two next Quotations in behalf of Sincerity, are in the same Chapter the second to the *Romans*. But the Reader is by this Time so thoroughly acquainted with the Apostle's Discourse, by what I have said above, that I presume he need not be told, that these two Verses (14, 15) are only a Parenthesis; that they plainly relate to those Nations that never had the Advantages of Revelation; and all that can be pretended from the Words is, that God will consider such Nations with regard to the Lights they have severally had; but that they shall meet with all the *Reward* of the *Faithful* in Christ, or that they shall have any *Reward* in another Life, it is not here said nor suggested.

However,

However, you go on with your *beloved Article*, and manfully affirm, (tho' with some Caution in the Close) that *the Gentiles themselves shall be judg'd by their Sincerity, and not condemned for involuntary Errors.*

Judge is now the *Word*, and that has holpen you (upon usual Application) to two or three more Verses in the 14th Chapter of this Epistle v. 10, 11. But as every Spinster, every Child that can but read the Words, must see at first Glance, that the Subject of the Chapter is to prevent weak and fallible Men from judging, condemning, despising, persecuting, or offending one the other about Matters of an *indifferent Nature*, from the Consideration (indeed) that we have a superior *Judge*; but without the least Syllable, the least Hint, either of the *Gentiles*, of *Sincerity*, or of the Way or Manner of Process in that great Judgment; I believe you your self would think me impertinent, should I offer to detain you with farther *Comment* on the Words of the Apostle, or Consideration of your own.

But in the 22^d Verse of the same Chapter, *We are told* (say you) *who shall be judged to Happiness. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.* And first Epistle of St. John Chap. iii. 21. *Beloved, if our Hearts condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God.*

I should have thought by these two last Quotations, that you had forgot your *Text* (which is, *that sincere Infidels have a Title to the same Reward with the sincere Faithful*); but to prevent this, you very dexterously premise the Exposition of your two Verses in these emphatical Words, *We are told who shall be judged to Happiness.*

This was excellently well contrived! For no Man would have thought (without such a Premonition) that those said Verses had the least View

to a future Judgment. And I am afraid still the Reader will have some Difficulty to find out the Pinch and Poyancy of the Argument! I will therefore (by your Leave) lay before him your plain Construction of the Words, in so demonstrating a Manner, that he shall not be able to miss your *sincere* *Heathens*, nor longer Doubt of their being judg'd to Happiness.

Thus then *Romans* xiv. 22.

He——	} that is,	{	A Worshipper of <i>Di-</i>
Who condemneth not			<i>ana,</i>
himself,			Who sincerely believes
Is Happy——			her a Goddess,
			Shall be judg'd to Hap-
			piness by Christ,
			whom he sincerely
			believes an Impos-
			tor.

The Text of *St. John* thus:

We——	} that is,	{	I <i>John</i> and the rest of
If our Hearts condemn			us <i>Gentiles</i> and <i>In-</i>
us not,			<i>fidels,</i>
Have Confidence towards			If we be sincere in our
God.			Infidelity,
			Shall be judg'd to as
			much Glory and
			Happiness as the
			best of Christ's Fol-
			lowers.

See what Learning and hard Study will do—! They talk of *Priestcraft* for cutting, shuffling, and metamorphosing a Text! But I am more beholden to *Lay-craft* for Copies of this Art, than to all the Gowns

Gowns and Cassocks in *Christendom*! I defy all the *Jesuits* of the Order, to shew me a better Genius at these Feats than I have before me. Here is a *new Light* struck out of a pair of Texts, that would have kept me in Darkness as long as I live! I should have always followed the plain Letter, and Thread of the Discourse; and should never have imagined that the Apostles had any other Design in these Words, but to admonish their *Christian Disciples* to keep a good Conscience; not to let their Actions shame their Professions, but to live so that their own *Hearts might not condemn or reproach them*; to assure them that they would feel great Comfort and Confidence in an *innocent Soul*; that this would *strengthen* them under all their *Persecutions*; and *encourage* them boldly to open their Grief, and crave Relief with *Chearfulness* and *Constancy* at the Throne of God.

We have nothing now behind but your two Instances, *Cornelius*, and *Lydia*; whom here you (have Occasion to) call *Heathens*. To these I shall only need to say, that I am much delighted with the high Commendations given them in Scripture (tho' I wonder *Cornelius* is so well in your Graces, who was so irreligious as to be *always praying*): And wherever I shall meet with any other Person (whether *Jew* or *Gentile*) indued with such *natural Piety*, Charity, and Virtue, I shall confidently pray that God will *reward* him (as he did them) by leading him into the precious *Knowledge of Christ*; by bestowing upon him the *Blessings* of the Gospel, and the *Privileges* of the *Faithful*.——But now I think on't, I may spare my *Prayers*, for as long as he is *sincere* he is as well without them!

Having thus considered *your* Notions of *Sincerity*, and the Texts of Scripture by which you would seem to support these Notions; I beg leave

to add a Word or two of my own Thoughts on this Subject; that you may see plainly, how and wherein I differ from you; and that you may be satisfied that I oppose you no farther, than *Sincerity* it self obliges me to do.

I profess then to you and all the World, that I have an inviolable Respect for this great *Virtue*; and an *universal Charity* towards Men of all Denominations, as far as they are governed by it. I verily believe it is that, without which no Person whatever can be approved of by the Father and Fountain of Truth; that which can never go *unrewarded* by infinite Mercy; and that by which the *Ninevites*, and other Pagans, shall rise up in Judgment against the *Men of this Generation*. But still, that it is the *only Article* by which our everlasting Happiness or Misery are to be determined; that a sincere Faith in *Christ*, in *Mahomet*, or in the *Independent Whig*, is equally effectual towards the *full Reward* of God's chosen People, I dare not affirm, nor assent to, for the following Reasons.

First, Because I have no Authority in Scripture for such a *Comprehension*. The same Divine Person, who laid down his Life for the *Expiation* of Sin, and the *Salvation* of Sinners, has told me by his Apostles, that this Salvation is to be acquired on our Part through FAITH in his Blood; and he has expressly declared with his own Mouth, that *he who BELIEVETH and is baptized, shall be saved; but he who BELIEVETH NOT shall be damned*. And whatever our Charity may suggest to us to hope, from infinite Love and Mercy, in behalf of Unbelievers, who had not *Opportunities*, or *Power* to see the Strength of those Reasons, which should have convinced them of their *Errors*; yet we have no *Right* to apply to them the Promises that were made to BELIEVERS only. For the one the most

is a just HOPE of Compassion and Excuse; for the other there appears an infallible TITLE, a Divine PROMISE of inestimable Reward. The Reasons why incomprehensible Power and Wisdom should make this Discrimination, I need not, I am not to inquire into: But it is sufficient for me, who believe the Scripture to be God's Word, that it is there affirmed. But,

Secondly, I should suppose such a *Difference* even from the Nature of the thing. The Search after *Truth* is natural to us; the Desire of it is implanted in our Souls by him that made us; it becomes our Duty by being so *implanted*, as well as by the expresse Commands of God; and the Attainment of that Jewel is worthily esteemed our Happiness and Perfection. And as in all probability (the Creator delighting for the most Part to bring about his great *Ends* by natural Causes) I say, as a Review and Conscience of past Behaviour, and a serious Reflection on the Management of our several Talents, in this State of Probation, will, in all probability, be no inconsiderable Part of our Rewards or Punishments, our Comfort or Misery in the World to come; so I cannot but think, but those who have spent their Days in *Error*, *Folly* or *Infidelity*, must fall very short of the full Reward of those faithful Servants of Christ, whose *Retrospect* must needs afford them more pleasing Reflections. I do not affirm that the least Pain or Sorrow shall be able to approach his Presence, where is *Fulness of Joy*; but I cannot but suppose, that there will be Degrees of Happiness even in Heaven it self; that those Degrees will naturally arise from Consciousness and Reflection in past Behaviour; that the *Wise* and *Faithful* shall have more comfortable Ideas of this Kind, than the Sceptick and Infidel, and that the meek, modest, and humble Christian shall have a pleasant Review, and a

more consummate *Reward* than your *sincere Gentle* or Apostate.

But *Thirdly*, (to finish this Controversy at once) 'tis a very great Question, whether, strictly speaking, and in the Eye of infinite Wisdom, there is such a Thing in Being as *Sincerity*; and whether this your boasted Virtue, this your last Resort and Confidence be not a meer *Ens rationis*, a Creature of your own Fancy. I am sure, as it is described by some great Authors, it is not in the Power of mortal Man to tell when he has it, nor where it is to be had!

You venture indeed to promise in behalf of God, that *every Man's Endeavours shall be accepted when he has done his best*: But who is the Man that can pretend a Right to this Promise? Men may flatter themselves, and think themselves in earnest, and all the while their Resolutions are the Effect of Interest, or Prejudice.

To the best of my Remembrance, the Bishop of B——r gives no Man a Title to the Privileges of *Sincerity*, before he has made his Judgment with all possible Care and Caution; before he has guarded against the Influence of Education, Inclination, and Profit; before he has improved all Advantages both of Nature, and Circumstances; and proceeded in every probable Method of obtaining *true Knowledge*: Your self here allow that the *best Use is to be made of the Faculties God has given us*; that we must *do all that is in our Power to do* towards a right Judgment: Nor can I suppose, that you will ever take upon you to maintain, that a Man is not *criminal* in those *Errors* that are any way *wilful* and affected; or that he is not punishable for those *Mistakes*, that grow out of *Sloth, Pride, Peevishness*, or any other *Vice*.

Where

Where then is the Mortal that can boast to his Maker that he has *done his best*; or that can challenge this *Reward* supposed to be due to *perfect Sincerity*? We of the Church of *England* have as much to say in behalf of our Orthodoxy, as those that would reform us; yet we do not stick to own our selves fallible and imperfect in every Thing that's good; we daily confess we have *left undone those things we ought to have done*, in this and all respects; and pray for God's Grace to *inligten* and *direct* us in spiritual Wisdom, that we may *perceive and know what we ought to do*, and have *Strength* to fulfil it.

There are diverse Sects who differ from us; who quarrel, oppose, censure, or slander us! Do you know the happy Man among all these, who has been no way tardy in the Pursuit of *Truth*? Can you point out the Person, whom you dare affirm to be perfectly divested of *Prejudice*, and *Interest*; to whom neither *Authority*, *Education*, *Conversation*, *Quarrel*, *Favour*, *Affection*, *Envy*, *Pride*, *Gain*, nor *Flattery*, have given the Bias? Can you name to me a *Heathen*, or *Infidel*, who have made the best of the *Light of Nature*; who have clogg'd their Progress towards the Knowledge of their Creator, by no *Lust* or *Intemperance*, *Sloth*, *Luxury*, or *Love to Mammon*? Or can you bring a *Free-Thinker* (among all your Acquaintance), who can judge a Cause betwixt Pleasure and Piety, with perfect *Indifferency*; whose Heart does not swell at the Word *Priest*, who can read what I have here written in behalf of Religion with *Impartiality*, or answer it with *Sincerity*?

There is no Man can affirm of his own self, that his *Sincerity* is perfect. He may really believe what he now professes; but is he sure it was not some Fault, or Neglect, that caused him to believe

it? We know not how our Offences may have warpt us, or alienated that Grace that should have been our Guide. Our Corruptions insensibly set a Bias on our Thoughts; and our Way of living, our Circumstances in the World, our Attachments to Society, our bodily Constitutions, or the very Meat and Drink we are accustomed to, have an imperceptible Power to incline our Judgments.

The Tree is crooked by a small Accident that beset it when a Twig. As the Body of Man is very often, to his last Moments, deformed by the ill Tendance he had of her who suckled him; so his Soul is depraved, or stunted in Knowledge by some *truant, idle, or vicious* Tricks he play'd in his Youth: And who can tell but the main Cause of some Men's Antipathy against the *Cloth*, may be from the frightful Ideas they conceived of *Birch* and *Parson*, when they were *naughty School-Boys*?

So that in a Word it is in vain for us to put our Trust in *Sincerity* only. As the Apostle argues, that the *Law could not save us, because our Obedience thereto cannot be perfect*; the same may be said with respect to *Sincerity*; and the same Inference may be justly made as to the *Necessity* of Faith in Christ. I again acknowledge it is what no Person, that Hopes for Salvation, must willingly, and knowingly, dare to be without; it is every one's Duty to honour and cherish it; and carefully to improve it, by a strict Examination into the Reasons and Arguments on which his Determinations are built, and by a severe Discharge of every Ingredient that may corrupt his Judgment: But after all, as it is at best but *imperfect*, it requires the Perfection of Christ to compleat it. Like all other Virtues it is rendered *acceptable* to our heavenly Father, thro' his Son's *Merits*, and our own *Faith*.

“ This

“ This comprehensive Charity, this Spirit of
 “ publick Beneficence runs every where through
 “ the New Testament; nor can I find any
 “ Precept there given, but what is manifestly
 “ advantageous to Mankind, conducing to their
 “ present Happiness, and deducible from eternal
 “ Reason, and the Result of it. *Mat. xxii. 35,*
 “ to 39. A Lawyer ask’d of our Saviour, *Which*
 “ *is the great Commandment of the Law? And Je-*
 “ *sus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy*
 “ *God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul,*
 “ *and with all thy Mind. This is the first and great*
 “ *Commandment; and the second is like unto it :*
 “ *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self. Upon*
 “ *these two Commandments hang all the Law and*
 “ *the Prophets.*

“ Another Lawyer asks him, (*Luke x. 25.*)
 “ *What shall I do to obtain eternal Life? And he*
 “ *said unto him, What is written in the Law? How*
 “ *readest thou? And he said, Thou shalt love the*
 “ *Lord thy God with all thy Soul, and with all thy*
 “ *Strength, and with all thy Mind, and thy Neigh-*
 “ *bour as thy self. And he said unto him, Thou hast*
 “ *answered right, this do and thou shalt live. And*
 “ *Chap. xviii. 18, and 20, &c. A certain Ruler*
 “ *asked him saying, Good Master, what shall I do*
 “ *to inherit eternal Life? And Jesus said, Thou*
 “ *knowest the Commandments; do not commit Adul-*
 “ *tery; do not kill; do not steal; do not bear false*
 “ *Witness; honour thy Father and thy Mother. He*
 “ *indeed adds afterwards another Condition, which*
 “ *was to sell all he had and give to the Poor; which*
 “ *the Ruler could not bring himself to comply*
 “ *with: Tho’ I dare say, he would have promised*
 “ *to have believed Creeds by the Dozen, if those*
 “ *would have done him any Service. But I can-*
 “ *not find that in all Scripture our Saviour does*
 “ *impose upon us the Belief of one modern*

“ Creed, or of any other but that he was the
 “ Messiah.

“ Chap. xix. 8. *Zaccheus a Publican said unto
 “ the Lord, Half of my Goods I give unto the Poor,
 “ and if I have taken any thing from any Man, I
 “ restore him four-fold: And Jesus said unto him,
 “ This Day is Salvation come into thy House; with-
 “ out asking him one Question about his Faith.*

“ Rom. xiii. 8, 9. *Owe no Man any thing but
 “ to love one another; for he that loveth another
 “ hath fulfilled the Law: For this, thou shalt not
 “ commit Adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt
 “ not steal, thou shalt not bear false Witness, thou
 “ shalt not covet; and if there be any other Com-
 “ mandment it is briefly comprehended in this Saying,
 “ namely, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy
 “ self. The same Doctrine in another Place is
 “ thus shortly described; By this shall all Men
 “ know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one an-
 “ other. So that the Love of God and of our
 “ Neighbour is the whole Duty of a Christian.
 “ The first implies the Worship of God, or ra-
 “ ther is the true and very Worship of God in Spi-
 “ rit and in Truth; and the latter comprehends
 “ all the moral and social Virtues. First Epistle
 “ of John iv. 7, 8. *Beloved, let us love one ano-
 “ ther, for Love is of God; and every one that lov-
 “ eth is born of God and knoweth God; he that
 “ loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is Love.
 “ v. 16. God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love,
 “ dwelleth in God, and God in him. And Chap. v.
 “ 3. St. John defines what the Love of God is,
 “ namely, For this is the Love of God, that we
 “ keep his Commandments.**

“ This appears still more evident, when we
 “ examine for what Virtues and Crimes Men
 “ will be rewarded and punished eternally. *Mat.
 “ xxv. 31. When the Son of Man shall come in his
 “ Glory,*

“ Glory, and all the holy Angels with him; then
 “ shall he sit upon the Throne of his Glory, and be-
 “ fore him shall be gathered all Nations; and he
 “ shall separate them one from another, as a Shep-
 “ herd divideth his Sheep from the Goats; and he
 “ shall set the Sheep on the right Hand, and the
 “ Goats on the left. Then shall the King say to them
 “ on the right Hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father,
 “ inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the
 “ Foundation of the World: For I was hungry, and
 “ ye gave me Meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me
 “ Drink; I was a Stranger, and ye took me in;
 “ naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye vi-
 “ sited me; in Prison, and ye came unto me. Then
 “ shall he say to them also on the left Hand, Depart
 “ from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for
 “ the Devil and his Angels; for I was hungry, and
 “ ye gave me no Meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave
 “ me no Drink; I was a Stranger, and ye took me
 “ not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in
 “ Prison, and ye visited me not.

I have given the Reader a View of these five
 Paragraphs together, because they are pretty near
 (after your manner of Connexion) to the same Pur-
 pose. The Design of them is in general to shew
 the Necessity of *Charity and Benevolence*; and with
 abundance of Pains to make out (what was never
 yet denied) that the *Love of God* and of *our Neigh-
 bour* is the whole Duty of a Christian. The first,
 you say, implies the *Worship of God*; the latter
 comprehends all *moral and social Virtues*. So that
 take your Words with your own Comment upon
 them, and there is no body, I say, will, or per-
 haps ever did, deny the Truth of your Assertion;
 because it is no more than a much better *Author*
 has told us in his Gospel; and because every Du-
 ty both of Faith and Practice towards our God,
 our Neighbour, and even our selves, are very natu-
 rally

sally included under one or other of these comprehensive Precepts. This is kind and courteous! But we must not expect a Man of your Metal to tread long in beaten Paths! How fair soever your Nosesgay may promise, we must beware of the Nettle!

When you therefore affirm that there is no *Precept in the New Testament but what is manifestly advantageous to Mankind, conducing to their present Happiness, deducible from eternal Reason, and the Result of it*, (tho' your Meaning may be very good and orthodox, yet) I beg leave to make some Exceptions to these *Expressions*, because there may be some Danger, if weak or carnal Men should try every Command of God by these Marks or Characters.

First then, you will give me leave to suppose that the two *Sacraments* may not of their own Nature exactly tally with your Definition; and yet as they are the Institutions of Christ himself, I am in great Hopes they may keep their Places among the *Precepts of the New Testament*.

Secondly, There are diverse other Commands, that some Men may think not so very plainly contained in the 'foresaid Description; such as,

Not to invite Kinsmen, or rich Neighbours.

Not to resist Evil, but turn t'other Cheek to those that smite us.

Not to let our left Hand know the good Deeds of our Right.

To give to every one that asketh, and chearfully to part with those Goods we have earned or purchased, for the Use of the Poor.

To harbour no Thoughts of Revenge, but to love our Enemies, and do good to those that hate us, &c.

To rejoice at Persecutions, and confess our Saviour

viour before his greatest Enemies, and in Times of most Danger.

To do to others in all Cases, as we or any honest Man would be done unto.

I say, though these, and many more Precepts in the New Testament, may be properly said to be the *Result of eternal Reason*, with respect to God; yet I can hardly affirm them to be deducible from any Thoughts or Reflections of meer Man. They are a great *Improvement* of (tho' built upon) the *Law and the Prophets*; nor could the wisest Lawgivers, or the most learned and judicious Moralists, with their utmost Application, ever pretend to equal them. They are all, I own, for the *general Interest* of Mankind, agreeable to the *moral Law*, and to the Law of Nature (both which direct us to love our Maker, and our Fellow Creatures): But still I suppose we had never been blest with them in their present Perfection, had we not received them from the *Son of the most High*.

What you mean by *deducible from eternal Reason, and the Result of it*, does not yet appear; but this will appear to any one who shall read the New Testament, or but the Discourses of Christ himself; that the Precepts of Christianity are much nobler, more perfect, more conducive both to temporal and eternal Happiness, than Man with all his *Reason*, and his *Vanity*, could ever have *thought or wish'd*: More especially if we consider the numerous Commands that are *occasionally* given, by way of *Implication*, in the wise Observations our Saviour makes, in the Lessons he teaches; the Parables he pronounces; the Checks, Rebukes, Admonitions, and Observations, he is every where giving.

Another Expression there is of yours in the second of these Paragraphs, which will detain us a little.

little. Speaking of the rich Ruler, who was offended at our Lord's Admonition to him, to *sell all he had and give to the Poor*, your Reflection is as follows: "I dare say he would have promised
 "to have believed Creeds by the Dozen, if those
 "would have done him any Service. But I cannot find that in all Scripture our Saviour does
 "impose upon us the Belief of one modern Creed,
 "or of any other, but that he was the Messias.

I am never out of Humour when you condescend to be merry and facetious; and therefore will not offer to spoil the Jest, you are here pleased to crack, by remarking on its Impertinency, its Improbability, or its Indecency: But taking it for granted that you wanted an *Occasion* to shew your Displeasure against things going by the Name of *Creeds*; presuming also that by *Creeds* you here mean particularly those *Summaries of Faith*, held and professed as *Creeds* by (I think) every established Church in the World; and that you think fit in this Place to call them *modern*, only because you do not know how *antient* they are; I say, (for Peace and Brevity) admitting all this, I will proceed to consider impartially the Nature and Merits of these things, that have given so great Trouble and Offence to late *Reformers*. And if it shall appear, that there is nothing in the *Things* themselves, or in the *Use* we make of them, but what is lawful and expedient; I hope you will admit of our Title to them, at least 'till you have condescended to give some particular Reasons for depriving us of them. I say, the Burden is injustice upon the *Opponent*; 'tis your Part to shew our *Abuse* of them; to object to the *Matter* of which they are composed; or point out the *Heresies* or *Improbabilities* contained in them: And this (if I mistake not) will be a *Labour* equal to your *Herculean Might*; here will be Work enough, and
 Room

Room enough to display your Learning and your Wit; here is a whole *Posse* of Articles at your Service, and at your Mercy; and this I dare promise you (as an Encouragement to Diligence) that I will renounce them for ever and follow you, as soon as you have demonstrated as many Absurdities in all of them, as I have in your *Necessity* of *one only*.

A Creed (as I understand the Word) is a *Brief Summary of the chief Principles necessary to be believed by a Christian, collected out of Scripture, and agreeable thereto*.

By *Chief* I mean the most comprehensive, the most material, and the most peculiar to the Doctrine of Christ (for I cannot say the *only Principles*, because whoever believes these, of Consequence will believe diverse others; and because in a larger Sense, whatever any Christian finds inserted or implied in Scripture, is an Article of his Faith).

I say *necessary to be believed*, because these Principles are of the very Nature and Essence of the Christian Covenant; and without the *Belief* of them, whatever we may hope from infinite Mercy, we have no *Authority* to apply to any one the Promises of God in Christ.

I say *collected out of Scripture*, because they are to be believed from the *Authority* of Scripture; and therefore I add, *agreeable thereto*; because whatever is not so, ought not to be proposed as an Object of *divine Faith*.

This is my Sense of the Nature of *Creeds*, by which we may guess the proper *Ends* of them; which are the *Edification* of Christian People, the *Glory of God*, and the *Preservation of his Truth*.

I say *Edification*, because by these *Summaries*, the divine Revelations are put into a Method the more easy to be taught, remember'd, and understood.

stood. The Declarations and Discoveries of God's Nature, his Providence, and his Will, made at different Times, and on diverse Occasions, are brought together by these Compendiums into one View, by such Connexion made more agreeable and self-consistent; and the Difficulties arising from various Languages, imperfect Translations, obsolete Phrases, the Idiom of Words, the Diversity of Metaphors, and the strange Customs and Notions of distant Times, and remote Countries, are hereby cleared, explained, and removed; and the whole proposed to Christians for their Assent in Terms the most comprehensive and agreeable to their own Ways of thinking and speaking.

I say the *Glory of God*, because by the Help of these nervous Epitomes, we can assert the *Truth* of all his Revelations at one Time, and with one Voice, because by this Means we have an Opportunity of *confessing* our Saviour and his Doctrines *before Men*; and professing to the World our Faith and Constancy to the Shame of God's Enemies, and the Encouragement of his Servants.

I say also the *Preservation of his Truth*, because these Creeds are not only a Help to a right Judgment, to the Understanding, and Memory; but they serve for a general Guide in the Interpretation of difficult Texts; they are ever at Hand, and in our Minds, to prevent any rash and hasty Assent to wrong Notions of our own, or other Men's.———*And above all (as I may tell you) they are* an excellent Guard against the Sophisms of crafty Priests; a Touch-Stone ever ready to try the Weight of their Expositions; a Square which we can *Extempore* apply to their studied Harangues and Declamations; and a Means to detect them (you know) in those mischievous and selfish Doctrines, which, perhaps, we may not have Skill enough

enough to fix on them by the Scriptures at large.

This is the *Nature*, and these the *Ends* of Christian *Creeds*: In this Notion, and with these Views they were first compiled by the Fathers of the Church; and as such they are received by the Church of *England*. And whatever Form of Words may be complemented with the *Name* of *Creed*, without these Marks and Characters; we look on it as *spurious* and *counterfeit*, and no more acknowledge its Title or Authority, than we do those of the *Pretender* to our Crown, for calling himself King.

Where then, I pray, are the Grounds of your Complaint; and what is the Occasion of such lamentable Outcries, as are made at these things? I hope there is no particular Malignity in the word *Creed*, nor can I see but the five Letters whereof it is composed, may be as harmless here, as in the Formation of any other Syllables. If the *Thing* is what you object against, you should in all Fairness shew us some *Reasons*, some solid and unaffected Reasons, of such Objection. If it be *unlawful*, you should tell us what *Law* it is a Violation of; whether the Law of *God*, of *Nature*, or of *Society*; and honestly explain to us those Texts of *Scripture*, those Principles of natural *Reason*, or those *Statutes*, or Ordinances which they unrighteously contradict. If *Inexpediency* be the main of the Accusation, you should then inform us how unapt they are to produce these *Ends* which we assign to them; and demonstrate to Mankind, out of your Affection to them, that they have been all to this Day, either Knaves or Fools: That *explaining God's Word is the Way to keep them in Ignorance of it*; that *teaching by Method is the Way to confound them*; that *often repeating is an Introduction to forgetting*; that *con-*
fessing

Jeſſing our Saviour and his Doctrines is an Affront and Diſhonour to him ; that to enable the People to judge of the Truth of what their Preachers tell them, is rank Priest-craft ; and that the Clergy's paeing themſelves in Tramels is laying Fetters (Oh ! Fetters, Perſecution, and Tyranny) upon their poor Neighbours.

But, perhaps, after all it may not be ſo much the Thing it ſelf, as the Makers of it, (thoſe Fathers, Prelates, Patriarchs, and others of the ungodly Tribe of Men of God) that your Wrath is bent at ! You ſhould then declare what Rate of Men had better Right to be employed in this Work, and who were better qualified to perform it. You ſhould ſhew us how vertuous, how diſ-intereſted, or how learned at leaſt the Laity were in theſe ancient Times ; and let us know their great, natural, acquired, or moral Abilities, as well as thoſe extraordinary human or divine *Deſignations*, that rendered them meet for this important Work of *teaching their Teachers*.

Till ſomething of this appear to us, we ſhall take it for granted, that thoſe who beſt underſtood the Language of the Holy Scripture, were beſt able to conſtrue and expound it ; that thoſe who were daily ſtudying, tranſcribing, tranſlating, and commenting on it, were naturally the likeliſt to know its Meaning : And if the ſame Perſons had moreover the Deſignation of the Magiſtrate, the Conſent of the People, and above all the *Ordination* of God himſelf, we cannot but conclude they were the beſt qualified to be Teachers of the Chriſtian Doctrines ; that they were the beſt Judges in what Way to teach them, and that they had the beſt Hand at making *Creeds*. — And that which eſpecially confirms me in this laſt Opinion is, the Peruſal of a *modern Creed*, made lately by a very famous *Author* ; by which it is manifeſt this is not
a Work

a Work that will thrive in the Hands of Lay-Men!

I am loth to think your *Offence* is taken from the special Doctrines contained in our *Creeds*, 'till you shall be so kind as to make your Exceptions to them; and as to the *Use* we make of these Symbols for instructing our Children, confirming our Brethren, and strengthening and confessing our own Faith, no serious Person (I believe) will venture to own himself our Adversary. So that I fear there is nothing left for you (after all this Lamentation) to object to; and that the Outcries against *Creeds* are therefore only general for want of Particulars.

Yet why should I dissemble, that there is the Pretence of two dreadful Articles still behind? *Imposition* and *Priestcraft*! Articles——either of which is sufficient to sink a thousand *Creeds* (if the Charge be true) to Perdition and Oblivion! This is Abomination! Antichrist! and the Whore of *Babylon*!

I will therefore next consider the Foundations of these terrible Indictments; and see with what Reason we of the Church of *England*, or the *Creeds* we are so fond of, may, or may not, be charged with *Imposition* or *Priestcraft*.

First *Imposition*.

Imposition is the Word, when one Person is forced to assent, or to pretend to assent to the Opinions of another: And in whatever Manner such Force is apply'd; whether to the Life, Liberty, or Pocket; it is justly to be abhor'd as a spiritual Tyranny, a Persecution, and an Usurpation of an Authority that cannot belong to fallible Man.

This is the Crime of the Church of *Rome*; who exalteth her self into the Seat of God; extends her Jurisdiction over the Consciences of Men; lays violent Hands on all within her Power; and

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with the Pains or Menaces of *Dragoons, Gallies, Inquisition, &c.* forces them to swallow her own *Decisions* and *Determinations*, as the Dictates of the divine Spirit. And if there be any other *Church*, or religious Society, that makes Use of the least Degree of *Violence* towards a wished *Uniformity*; that lays on Men, or takes from them, any thing contrary to their *natural Rights, Liberties, or Properties*; to *constrain* their Practice against their Judgments in religious Matters, *Doctrine, or Worship*, how pure or decent soever that *Doctrine or Worship* may be, yet still this *Violence* is a Root of *Popery*; 'tis a Usurpation of God's *Prerogative*; 'tis directly opposite to the Spirit of the *Gospel*; the natural *Freedom* and *Independency* of the Soul; and the Nature of *Government* it self; which upon no Scheme can be supposed to discharge Men of their Duty to the *King of Kings*.

But pray what Complaints of this Nature has an *Englishman* to make? We have your own Word for it (in Page 43.), *that the sole Persecution now on Foot is against High-Church-Men*, (which I suppose you do not envy them) and you give your writing the *Independent Whig*, as an Instance (truly manifest and undeniable) of the *full Liberty* Men have to think and say what they please on Matters of Religion. There is not a Person that can with Reason accuse us of any the least *Restraint* on his *Conscience*: All sorts of Dissenters have full *Toleration* to worship God in their own Way; every *Rate, Rank, or Club* of People take the *License* to descant, to examine, to judge, to contradict, ridicule, or reproach the *established Church*, or any of her *Doctrines*; and lastly, the *Independent Whig* has made bold to damn her good old *Creeds*, and under the *Penalties* of Satire and Slander, has imposed a new one of his own Invention.

This then (as you say) is the only *Imposition* I can think of at present; unless the Clergy themselves complain, *that an Avowance, or Subscription of CREEDS and ARTICLES is imposed on them as Qualifications for Church Preferments.*

I remember, in one of your Papers you took it into your Head to put on a great and sudden Air of Friendship for the Church Ministry; sadly compassionating their being confined within the Fences of *Subscriptions, Suspensions, and the like*; and gravely contending that they (*such pious, learned, disinterested, heavenly Souls!*) should have *Liberty* to teach their own Doctrines and Opinions. What was at the bottom of this unusual Favour, I cannot determine: I am loth to affirm, that the Design of thus lengthening our *Tether* was in Hopes to intangle us; but this I must say, that I can by no Means join with you in the Complaint, tho' much more nearly concerned in it. I see no Reason to call this Caution an *Imposition*; or if you will give it that Name, I must needs contend such *Imposition* is both *lawful and convenient.*

For the Proof of this I lay before you the following Positions.

First, *It is lawful for a civil Society of Men, embracing and receiving the Christian Religion, as laid down in the holy Scriptures, to incorporate themselves into a religious Society, and to unite together for the Worship of God, as Christians, by the Directions of the said Scriptures.*

As this is the Foundation of all Pretences to Toleration, and Liberty of Conscience, for those *minor Societies*, who take Occasion to separate themselves from the *Majority* or the *Community*; I cannot suspect but you will allow it to be asserted (*a fortiori*) of the *whole*, there being no Pretence of any Authority human or divine, to hinder them from so uniting and incorporating.

Secondly, If such Society may so unite to worship God as Christians, it necessarily follows, that *they may consent together to make Use of such FORMS and METHODS of Worship, as shall seem to them most expedient to the Ends of their Worship; and that such FORMS and Methods are all LAWFUL, unless they some Way or other interfere with the Laws of God.* For the Proof of this I need go no farther than your own Words, in your 49th Paper:

“ So many are the various and contradictory Opinions and Reasonings of Men, that no voluntary Society or Assembly can act or long hold together, without establishing certain Rules and Orders among themselves, regarding the common Interests and Conduct of the Society, and appointing Persons, whose Duty it shall be, to see those Orders put in Execution; and if any Member does not think it lawful or expedient to submit to the publick Regulations, they must have a Right to exclude him, or in other Words, to excommunicate him from their Body, if he does not choose to separate himself.

“ If the Design of the Meeting is to worship God, to join in the same Prayers, and for Exhortation and Edification (which Assembly is called a Church) there must be Time and Place appointed, when and where they are to meet, and Persons to prepare and keep in Order all Things necessary for their Meetings: There must be one or more appointed to read these Prayers to the Congregation, in which they are to join, and to do those Offices which can be performed only by single Persons.—

By all this it is plain, and indeed self-evident, that without the Establishment of some certain *Rules, Orders, and Methods of proceeding and ordaining Persons to pursue those Methods,* there can

can be no *publick Worship*; and therefore, as there are no such particular Rules, Orders, or Methods, prescribed in the New Testament; it necessarily follows (unless there be some universal Pope, or Ordinary) that every *independent Society of Christians* has a Right to contrive, and prescribe them for their own Use. This is in Truth the very Nature of that *Liberty wherewith Christ has made us free*: A *Liberty* from any particular Law of Ceremonies; a *Liberty* from any one set of Rites universally binding; a *Liberty* to every independent Society, becoming Christians to choose for themselves, such Ecclesiastical Ordinances as suit best with their *civil Customs and Constitutions*, the *Fashions* of their Age or Country, their Ways of Thinking, their *Notions* of Decency and Solemnity. I deny not but this *Gospel Liberty* belongs in some Sense to every *single Christian*; nor can you deny but single Christians, when thus incorporated, may, and ought, to give up this *private Liberty* (as they do in civil Matters) to the Discretion of the publick; I am sure it is the direct Injunction of the Apostle. *Brethren, ye have been called unto Liberty, only use not Liberty for an Occasion to the Flesh, but by Love serve one another.*

Thirdly, As such Society is at Liberty to appoint Times, Places, and other Circumstantials of Worship, and by necessary Consequence to ordain Persons to take Care of such Worship, to minister in it, and to put such Orders in Execution; it will be lawful also to provide for the Maintenance of such Persons; to settle Stipends, or Revenues upon them; to establish such Funds, as will support them in their Employment, and probably encourage them to be diligent in it. This also is beyond all Contradiction, unless it be supposed that Men may not dispose of their Goods for their greatest Interest; that what may be done by every one single, may

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not be done by all in a Body; or that it is against the Will and Command of God, that they who *labour in his Worship should live by it.*

The Equity of the Thing, and the Practice of every Nation on Earth, shews such a *Provision* to be the Dictate of God's first *Law*, the *Law of Nature*; and *Revelation* still adds a greater Strength and Weight to it. In the *Law of Moses*, such an *Establishment* was really made, and the *Proportion* settled by God himself; and tho', under the Gospel, the *quantum* be perhaps left to Discretion, Justice, Affection, and Generosity; yet the *Claim* to the thing is constantly made: Our blessed Lord sent his Apostles without *Purse* or *Scrip*; he ordained that those who preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel; that those who are taught in the Word should minister to him that teacheth in all good things; and many more Texts are there to this Purpose, too obvious to need Repetition.

Fourthly, If it be lawful to make such *Settlement* and *Provision*, I presume of Consequence the *Society*, by whom such *Provision* is made, have a Right to determine what sort of Persons shall be capable of claiming this *Provision*, and what shall be the *Qualifications* that shall intitle them to it; and that if any one refuse so to qualify himself, he cannot pretend to be injured or persecuted, if such *Revenue* be withheld from him. I hope you will take Notice that I am here talking in your own *Way*, (I do not pretend to subject any *Institution* of God to the Discretion of *Man*; nor do I enter into any Dispute how far God has pointed out the Gospel Ministry, the Nature of their *Office*, or their *Qualifications* for it; but) as far as the *Institution* is *human*, so far it is subject to *human Authority*; and that *Society* by whom it is established, must have a Right to give the proper *Regulations* to it; as every one would put in, and scramble for a profitable Office, if there

there were not exclusive Terms and Conditions annexed to it; so it is equal to Demonstration that those who have a Right to *institute the Office*, and the Benefit, must have a Right also to determine those *Conditions*, and to see that they be performed. This is a Maxim in Nature; all useful *Ordinances* and Offices are founded upon it; and without it we run into every Degree of those Absurdities you so eloquently charge upon the *independent Interest of the Clergy*.

This I take to be the very Case of the *incorporated Society* of Christians in this Nation; and those particular Persons chosen to officiate in holy Things. Here are particular handsome Revenues settled on such *Officers*; and lest every one should intrude into an *Office*, where there is so much to be got, here are likewise certain *Conditions* and Qualifications ordained, which every one that aims at the Revenue must comply with. The *English Society* of Christians, or in other Words, the *Church of England* (for whatever this Society, or its Legislator, does in religious Matters, it does as a *Church*) has settled *Tithes*, *Lands*, *Offerings*, &c. on those of her Members that are *ordained*, (according to what she thinks the Institution of God) *to minister in the Word and Sacraments*; but this *Settlement* is only on the *Conditions* and *Qualifications* of conforming to the Rites and Modes of Worship she has established, as also *subscribing* and repeating those Creeds and Articles, she has received as *Truths revealed by God*.

You may, if you please, call this an *Imposition*, but a thousand of such *Impositions* are practised by every Society on Earth, and by every single Person upon Earth. If I have but a Boy to send to School, and threaten to withdraw the Child and the Stipend, unless his Master will teach him the *Assemblies Catechism*; or if I offer a Friend my

House and Table, on Condition he will constantly join with me in my Family Prayer; these things may be call'd by hard Names, if you please; but surely neither of the Persons can complain of any *Hardship*, or Injustice done them.

And is there any thing more to be said of the Church of *England*, in requiring her Clergy to comply with, or *subscribe* her *Creeeds* and *Liturgy*? *Incompetency* of Authority cannot be objected to such Injunction, because it is the Work of the *whole Society*, or the Legislature chosen to represent the whole in *all Causes Ecclesiastical and Civil*: The *Ends* of the Injunction are most certainly good and laudable; the *Honour of God*, the *Preservation* of his Truth, and the *Salvation* of Souls: The *Sanction* of the Law is not subject to the least Cavil, because the *Reward* is *voluntary* in the Society, the Work voluntary in those Ministers who choose to undertake it: And whosoever likes not the *Conditions*, the *Work* or the *Reward*, is deprived of nothing to which he can pretend the least Right, either by Nature, Gift, Labour, or Contract, but is left at Liberty to employ himself in any other Way; at least, as well as he might have done, had there never been such *Law* or *Settlement*.

Is it the *Inexpediency* then of these pretended *Impositions* you take Umbrage at? This is scarcely credible in an Author of such extraordinary Concern for the Publick; after he has detected so much *Folly*, *Ignorance*, *Prejudice*, *Bigotry*, *Hypocrisy*, *Selfishness*, *Craft*, *Cruelty*, *Error*, *Profaneness*, *Atheism*, and *Infidelity*, in these Guides of the People. These are your *own Words*, with great *Liberality* and innumerable Repetitions charged on the Clergy! And if this Charge be true, or but the least Part of it, I should really infer that my Countrymen of the Laity are in very bad
 † Hands,

Hands, and in sorrowful Circumstances; unless Care be taken to restrain that *self-seeking, self-preaching Tribe*, within some Bounds of Truth and Moderation: Considering also another of your Complaints, that they *have great Power, Interest, and Influence* in their Congregations, one would be tempted to wish the *Impositions* on them to be more severe; that every *Garment, Gesture, and Expression* should be strictly prescribed them; and instead of trusting them with making for their Flocks, every one his own Creed or Prayers, that the very *Sermons* they preach should be only *Homilies, Proclamations, or Acts of Parliament*.

But supposing we may not be all quite so bad as above represented; yet it cannot be denied that we are Mortals and fallible, subject to Mistake, Passion, or Whimsy as other Men: We do not pretend an Exemption from Party, Prejudice, or Interest; nor can it be dissembled what ill Uses some publick Teachers might make of their Liberty; what Advantages they might take of the Ignorance, the Zeal, or the Affections of their Hearers; how pernicious Doctrines, or Notions, they might infuse, in pursuit of private Malice or Ambition. For these Reasons we murmur not at the Society, whereof we are a part; that, for the good of the whole, we are generally confined within the Fences of *Creeds, Articles, and Liturgies*. The Scripture indeed (which is our outer Circle) is the *Rule of Faith*, the last Appeal, the *Standard* of Truth, and by these very Articles acknowledged to be their own Judge.

But still so antient, and out of Use, are Languages in which the Scripture was written; so different were the Times, the Phrases, the Style; so various were the Customs, the Occasions, the Circumstances to which it refers; and all this accompanied with such a Diversity of Observations,
and

and by such seeming Opposition and Contradiction of Expressions; that strange would be the Confusion, and intolerable the Perplexity and Diffidence, our Hearers must needs be under, were not their Teachers thus generally *guided* in their Prayers to God, and their *Expositions* of his Word; and had not themselves the Advantage of these *short Summaries* of their Christian Faith, which by a constant Repetition they have got by Heart; which they can in an instant have Recourse to, and judge us by. I confess this Confinement may happen to give some Disease of Mind to an honest Divine, who may chance to be persuaded (if there be any such), that the *Articles* he has signed, or the *Creeds* he is obliged to pronounce, have some Disagreement with any Part of Scripture: To this I can only say, I pity such Person; he knows his Remedy, which is to make his Interest give Place to his *Conscience*; and single Members must bear with Inconveniencies for the sake of the Body. However, this brings us to consider,

Secondly, The *Priestcraft* of such Impositions. Should a plain Foreigner, but little acquainted with the *English* Laws, or Language, happen into a certain Coffee-House, within a Mile of *Temple-Bar*; and there observe the Gravity, and great Earnestness, with which these three Words *Creeds*, *Impositions*, *Priestcraft*, dance the Hay, on the Tongues of some of our celebrated Demagogues; being not a Critick in our Phraseology, I cannot say he would be able to make Sense or Argument of the Discourse: But this I am sure, he would immediately pack up his *Alls*, and depart into his own Country, and tell his Friends the most hideous Stories of *Racks*, and *Gallies*, *Persecution*, and *Inquisition*, that ever were heard of in *Spain* or *Italy*.

Why!

Why! Are not *Creeds the Inventions of Priests*; and is not *Imposition Persecution*, and is not *Persecution Priestcraft*?

I own we have such Things as *Creeds*, and those also of the Clergy's making; we have something you are pleased to call *Imposition* too: All the Mistake is, that these *Creeds* and these *Impositions* are upon the Clergy themselves! Oh *Priestcraft*! *Selfish Priestcraft*! *Self-devouring Priestcraft*! Oh cunning, crafty *Tribe of Levi*, that have tied themselves down to Truth, and Orthodoxy; and left the poor unhappy *Laity* to run their own Ways, to *Error* and *Mischief*, to *think freely*, to think perversely, or to think not at all! Why then hath this *Imposition* on the Clergy been so often called *Priestcraft*? Why, because it has.

After all I have said on this Subject, I know you will think I do not do you Justice, unless I take some Notice of what particular Observations you have made on these Matters in your sixth Paper.

But what is there in all that dismal Harangue, that can really affect the Church of *England*; or what Argument is *there* to be found against *Creeds* or *Impositions*, as we understand and make Use of them? Have you ventured to charge us with any one Instance as to *Unlawfulness* or *Inexpediency*? Or have you so much as said, that we do amiss in *believing*, *subscribing*, repeating in the *Church*, or *imposing* on the Clergy?

Instead of any thing thus plain or distinct, there is a grave Declamation in general Terms against *Supplements*, and *Improvements* of the Bible; against *human Authorities*, *Impositions*, and *Persecutions*; and a terrible Accusation drawn up against *intriguing Emperors*, *Popes*, and *Councils*; and all this with sly Suggestions (of what you and every one of Sense and Seriousness knows to be false)
that

that the Pretence of *Creeds* is to correct or improve the Word of God; and that the Designs of all those, who compiled them, were to *supplant, persecute, and ruin* their Neighbours.

But do these Arts become a Gentleman, and one who would illuminate and reform the World? Is every thing, that may be subject to Abuse, to be exploded in those Instances where it is rightly used; and are all Persons to be charged with the ill Practices and Corruptions of a few? Would you admit it as a just Way of arguing, should I rhetorically set forth the Artifice and Knavery, the Bribery, Delusion, Dissimulation, and Hypocrisy; the Menaces and Flattery, the Oppression and Partiality, that have been notoriously made Use of in some of our *Elections*, thence to infer that all Elections are the necessary Inducements to such *Corruptions*? Or shall I endeavour to overthrow the Credit of all our *Statutes*, by a florid Representation of that secret Management by which some may have been brought forth? By such Glosses as these, it would be an easy Matter to write a plausible Satire against the best things in the World! An Author of your Wit and other Abilities, on these Grounds, might work the People into an Aversion for both Religion and Government; such a false Eloquence would be ready to persuade us to put out all our *Fires*, because so many Houses and Lives have been destroyed by that raging Element; to forsake our *Wives*, because so many honest Men have been cuckolded and ruined by them.

If these are the Effects of Oratory and Eloquence, well might the Philosopher propose a Law for the Banishment of the Venders of so pernicious Wares!

But what Reason, or Pretence of Reason, do you here give, or can you give, for calling *Creeds Introductions to Ignorance*? Is not their plain

plain Design to teach, and to instruct; to guide Men in the Knowledge and Understanding of the Scriptures; and to lay before them a Method of Inquiry; the Heads or Marks whereby they may travel in a more punctual Examination of those Matters their Maker has revealed in distant Times, obsolete Languages, on divers Occasions, and in various Styles? Yet what an Absurdity is it in your Opinion to say, that *the Scripture is insufficient without human Aids and Explications?*

As absurd as you may think fit to fancy it, I will for this once venture to assert it; and venture my Reputation too on the *Defence* of the Position.

I desire you to tell me (for I am sure no body else can) how an honest *English* Farmer should ever have been a *Christian*; or at least how he should have been a *Protestant*, and capable of any Benefit from the *Word* so long since written by God's Direction, had it not been for the Help and Assistance of other Men? How should he understand the proper Signification of any one Sentence, or Phrase in the holy Scriptures? How would he be able to pick up any Religion out of it; nay, how should he read it, or so much as ever see it?

You will say, perhaps, that you never dreamt of denying so much *human Aid and Explication*, as is necessary for the Proof of its *Authority*; for truly copying, carefully delivering to Posterity, and faithfully translating it into our own Language. Very well! and are not the same Mediums necessary for the Examination of these *Proofs*, for comparing the *Copies*, for Inquiry into the *Traditions*, for judging of the Fidelity of the *Translations*, and understanding any thing at all of the Matters contained in them?

We are apt to take least Notice of those things that are most useful to us, before we come to want them.

them. The Circulation of our Blood, or playing of our Lungs, are seldom in our Thoughts, though the Moment they cease we are no more: And thus with respect to religious Knowledge, we overlook the Fountains from whence we draw it; we are vain, self-sufficient, and conceited of our Abilities; never considering the numerous Observations, Maxims, Arguments, Notions, Distinctions, Resolutions, Conclusions, Admonitions, and Directions of our *Elders*, and *Betters*, by which we are insensibly enriched; nor calling to Mind how naked, destitute, and ignorant we had been, were it not for these *human Assistances*. The Explication of Words, Phrases, and Things, comes to us by a secret Way of Tradition in reading and discoursing; yet as soon as we are ripe enough to censure or correct, and perhaps to add something to the Expositions or Discoveries of those who have gone before us, we ungratefully condemn the Stairs by which we mounted, and vainly conclude we are not at all beholden to others.

Yet alas, how small a Progress should we make in this or any other Science, of our own Strength? What a poor Figure would the best of us have made, if bred up without Books or Teachers; or had we not other Men's Shoulders to stand and vaunt upon? Had it not been for the Studies, the Industry, and the Abilities of our Predecessors, we must before this Day have lost the Scriptures, or the Knowledge of what to do with them; we had been barbarously ignorant of the Principles of the Gospel, and of every Inference that arises from it; we had been reduced to a Condition worse than any Popery, either to have totally lost our Faith, or to profess a Belief of what we do not understand, and yet have no body to guide us.

But if we must admit of *human Aids* and *Assistances*, yet what Pretence have *Creeeds* to that Office;

Office; those *Creeds* that are so manifestly *Introductions to Ignorance*?

This you tell us, but wise Men, and wiser Experience, every Nation and Generation of Christians have told us to the contrary; and their Opinion is confirmed by the Judgment of the whole World in every like Case. For so it happens, by the universal Suffrage of natural Reason, that *Creeds*, or somewhat of the same Nature, are made use of in teaching every Science upon Earth! Do not the Masters of every Profession digest, and *abridge* their several *Systems* into particular *Heads*, *Chapters*, and *Classes*; and is there not a Collection of Rules, Axioms, Principles (or Articles if you phrase), for the more regular and useful Progress in the Attainment of all sorts of Arts or Mysteries; as Grammar, Physick, Geometry, Ethicks, Poetry, Musick, and even in Mechanicks themselves?

If these Methods are convenient, and necessary in every other *Science*, why not in this? Wherein does Christian Knowledge appear so singular, that those Means that naturally improve us in every other Study, here tend to *Ignorance*? What Reason can be given why as much Care, Art, and Method should not be used in bringing Men up in the Knowledge of God, his Attributes, and Revelations, as in a worldly *Craft*; and what *Craft* is that which would hinder, or discourage the Knowledge of Religion, and keep Men in real Ignorance by the pretended Fear of it.

I could take Notice of diverse other Shifts, Glosses, Subtilties, and Absurdities, in this your sixth Paper; but as nothing is pretended to be proved by them, and no Inference drawn from them, I return to my old Subject.

“ But the want of Faith is here objected to no Man: No one is rewarded or punished for believing, or not believing in Transubstantiation,

“ Confub-

“ Consubstantiation, or the real Presence ; in Pre-
 “ destination or Free-Will; or for having, or not
 “ having, right or wrong Conceptions of the
 “ Trinity in Unity, the Incarnation, hypostatick
 “ Union, infinite Satisfaction, &c. Nor is the
 “ divine Right of Bishops, Presbyters, or Tithes,
 “ once mentioned: Not a Word about Obedience
 “ to spiritual Sovereigns, and Ecclesiastical Princes,
 “ or about receiving the Sacraments from a regu-
 “ lar Priest, descended in a right Line from the
 “ Apostles.

You will give me Leave to admonish the Rea-
 der (for his better Edification), that the Weight
 and Strength of this noble Paragraph consists only
 in this modest Postulatum; that *the Sum and Sub-
 stance of all the Christian Religion is comprehended
 in those five or six Verses* (Mat. xxv. 31, &c.), and
 therefore that *Transubstantiation, Predestination,
 Trinity, Incarnation, Bishops, Tithes,* and the rest
 of them, have no Title to the *Belief*, or *Disbelief*,
 of a Christian, because not mentioned in the said
 Verses. This Argument is so convincing, so de-
 monstrative, as to need no Comment!

But yet to oblige you——

The want of Faith is here objected to no Man—
 Do you think then that you have in these few
 Words (about *feeding the hungry, clothing the na-
 ked, &c.*) the whole, the only *Terms*, and *Condi-
 tions* of Salvation and Damnation, truly, literally,
 infallibly, and exclusive of all others? Is no Re-
 gard had to the Motives, or Principles, on which
 these good Actions are grounded, or that *Faith*, or
Love, that excites them in us? If so, happy is it
 for the *Hypocrite*, the Vain-glorious, and the Pro-
 digal! This is good News for the Popular, the
 Ambitious, the Briber and Corrupter of the Peo-
 ple! And truly by this Rule that jolly Highway-
 man who boasted to the Judge of this new *Ortho-
 doxy*,

doxy, of feeding the Hungry, clothing the Naked, and sending the Rich empty away, has a safe Title to that happy Invitation, Come, ye blessed, &c.

I confess I should have thought, that our Lord's Design in the forecited Place, is to recommend Charity towards poor Christians; from Consideration, that it will be one of the *main Articles*, on which we shall be tried; and that the Discharge of it is one very proper Step towards God's *Favour and Acceptance*. But that there are diverse other Duties to be observed also, is plain from the other Commands of Scripture, and particularly from St. Paul, who has told us, that we may *give all that we have to the Poor, and yet not be intitled so much as to the Praise of Charity*. That Faith is one of those other Duties, (or Conditions of eternal Acceptance) is beyond all Question, not only from the Words of Christ himself, who hath said, *He that believeth not shall be damned*; from St. Paul's Affirmations, that *whatever is not of Faith is Sin*, that *through Faith we are saved, justified, &c.*; but from this *emphatical, elegant, clear, sound, and rational* Decision of the Independent Whig, in the Beginning of this Paper, *the Confession of this Truth (viz. Jesus is the Messiah) is the unum magnum requisite to be believed*.

“No one is rewarded or punished for believing, or not believing in Transubstantiation, Consubstantiation, and so on.

Here you endeavour to scare the Reader with (what you think) a frightful Catalogue of *hard Words*! You have carefully picked up these cramp Terms, out of the several Controversies that have happened about Religion; and here thrown them in the Reader's Way, leaving him (without the least Help or Exposition of yours) to stare at them, and to imagine that they must be all swallowed whole, and rough as they are, if he

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hearkens

hearkens to the *Priests*——I remember a Lad (whose Father had made Shift to give him such Education, as might in Time qualify him to stand for Clerk of his native Parish) happening on some extraordinary Occasion to go to a considerable Market Town, where was a spruce Apothecary just set up; and getting an Opportunity to gape through the Wires, and seeing so many horrible strange Inscriptions on the Boxes and Gallipots, went home to his honoured Parents, and told them that he was sure that in such a Place there lived a Conjuror, for that in one Room he had read the Names of an *hundred Devils*; Devils it must be, for not one of them *was to be found in Scripture!* What Inferences would the same sprack Youth have made at the Sight of this Jargon, of your conjuring together? No doubt the same that is made by his Betters; *viz. These hard Words cannot belong to Religion, because they are not used in the Gospel.*

You must pardon me, if I suppose, that this sort of arguing could not flow from your Pen on any other Subject! But what shall *Archimedes* himself do, without Ground to stand on? Something must still be said to disgrace every thing that the Clergy seem concerned in! And if the Theme be barren, yet you know our Enemies have large Throats to swallow huge Absurdities, or to laugh at small Jest!

For your own Part, you need not be told that these, and many other hard Words, are but *Terms of Distinction*, made use of in Disputes among learned Men: They are the natural and necessary Product of *Dissention* and *Controversy*; and tho' not to be found in Scripture, their Design is to direct us to the *Meaning* of Scripture, and compendiously to point out the various Expositions, Tenets, and Decisions, of contending Parties. In
all

all Sciences whatsoever *Disputes* will arise among mortal Men; *Disputes* always beget *Factions*; and those *Factions* are briefly distinguished by a single *Term*, that gives some Hint at the *Opinions* they profess: Thus in Religion arose the Terms *Predestinarians*, *Unitarians*, *Presbyterians*, *Anabaptists*, &c. For this Reason is a certain Controversy commonly called by the unscriptural Name of *Quinquarticular*; and was our *Dispute* about the *one Article*, worth the Notice of the Age, I know not how soon it might be as *irreligiously* stiled the *solarticular* Controversy.

There has been so much babling and contending in the World, that the Design of such Words (as harsh as they may sound in the Ears of those who never considered them) is plainly and honestly for the Ease of Conversation; for fixing the Matter in Debate; for shortening the Discourse; and for giving the Mind of the Hearer an Idea of what we intend at once, and by one Word, instead of a long and tedious Description. This Method is taken in all Sciences and Faculties; in Physicks, Astronomy, Mathematicks, &c. But I need go no farther than Religion, or even those very *Terms* that you have here exposed.

Suppose then, I should say that the *Church of England* denies *Transubstantiation*; I think there is no body of Learning, or Reading, but knows my Meaning in such an Assertion: But if you forbid me the Use of the Terms *Church* and *Transubstantiation*, how many Words must I put in the Place of them, less clearly to express but the same thing? If it were any way needful, I could say the same in behalf of *Incarnation*, *hypostatick Union*, *infinite Satisfaction*, &c. But what is already said is more than sufficient——I am not debating, or offering to determine, in this Place, how far the several Disputants have been right or wrong

in their Opinions, hinted at in these Terms; nor do I in the least rejoice that so numerous, and so warm Contentions have arisen about religious Matters: But this I must stand to, that since such Controversies have arisen, the Use of these Terms compendiously to express them, is neither *criminal* nor *ridiculous*: *Error*, *Dispute*, and *Strife*, is not more natural to fallible Man, than *plain* and *distinct* speaking is decent and necessary to such, as would debate with Honesty.

But I beg you to consider the Rashness of your Assertion in this Place, *viz.* That *no Man is rewarded or punished for believing or not believing in Transubstantiation, Consubstantiation, &c.*! I am loth to suppose you mean believing in the bare Letters or Syllables of these Words; and if not, your Assertion is plainly this, that *no Man is rewarded or punished for believing or not believing the Doctrines hinted at by them*, or the Propositions implied in them. This therefore, I say, is a little rash, and deserves your second Thoughts: For are you sure of the Mind of God, that he will not call us to an Account for any *Errors* in these Points? Is not this making a little too free with your Maker's Prerogative? Have any of us Mortals Authority to prescribe how far his Mercy, or his Justice may extend? We dare not affirm that God will absolutely punish every Person according to his Deserts; but this I do affirm, he may if he please. That as we have all many and great Errors, so those in us that are affected, obstinate, voluntary, through Prejudice, Malice, or Sloth, may be *punished* by him, without his incurring any *Imputation* of Tyranny or Injustice.

“ Such a Religion as this which I have described, is agreeable to the divine Justice, which does not punish any Man for speculative Opinions; and especially for Opinions which neither
“ do

“ do good nor hurt to any one, and for Opinions
 “ which no Man can help.

As rash and ungodly as the foregoing Assertion appears to be, yet it is here again repeated in other Words. *There, no one is rewarded or punished, for believing or not believing——Here, it is not agreeable to the divine Justice, to punish for speculative Opinions——*

What particular Opinions those same *speculative Opinions* are, I cannot say; but this I must still say, that this Opinion of yours is very inconsistent with the *Honour* of the Almighty: These bold Assertions rob him of his Title of *Searcher of Hearts*; they cramp his Prerogative of punishing and rewarding; they maintain, that the great God of Truth has no regard to Truth, or Error, in those whom he has made after his own Image; nay they flatly charge him with Untruth, Dissimulation, and Injustice; as oft as he exhorteth us in his holy Word to *study his Statutes, to search the Scriptures, to seek after God, to follow Truth, to pursue Knowledge, Wisdom, and Discretion*; or as oft as he denounceth Wrath and Vengeance against Sloth and Folly, *Blindness of Heart, Ignorance, and Contempt of his Word*: I must acknowledge that this latter of your Assertions is something softened by these following Expressions, *which do neither good nor hurt*; and, *which no Man can help*.

As to this latter Gloss (*no Man can help*) I have spoken at large under the Point of *Sincerity*. But supposing it be never so true, that God cannot punish us for Errors that we cannot help; does it thence follow, that he cannot punish the Maintainers of *Transubstantiation, &c.*? Are you sure no body holds that Absurdity, who might have taken Measures to be better informed? This is a Proposition you ought either to have proved or beg'd, before your Argument has the least Weight: But it is

yours, and Authority must support it! God cannot punish for unavoidable Opinions: Ergo, he cannot punish for Transubstantiation.

But what, I pray, are these new fashion'd Opinions, that do neither good nor hurt? Why the Doctrines of Transubstantiation, Consubstantiation, real Presence, and the rest of them in the foregoing Paragraph. Are these Opinions then become all of a sudden so perfectly indifferent? Is Priestcraft so terrible, so detestable a thing, for being supposed to invent these *abstruse Notions*; and yet are these Notions intirely harmless, without Design or Use? Had you thought of this at the Beginning of your Book, you might have saved the Expence of abundance of Satire, and abundance of Slander! Then the very plain *Articles of Faith* were the *Invention of Priests*, and the *Watch-words of a Party*; designed to gull, to amaze, and inflave the poor gaping Laity: But now behold the Days are come that all Priestcraft is vanished! Transubstantiation itself may, for the present Occasion, be honestly defended! And as for the *divine Right of Bishops, Presbyters, and Tirbes*, as well as *Obedience to spiritual Sovereigns, and Ecclesiastical Princes*, (whatever Outcries may have been made against them) it now plainly appears, that they are all merely speculative, innocuous Opinions, that believed, or not believed, can do hurt to no one! I am sure there is no need to inform any of your Readers, what Advantages the Popish Priests do make of Transubstantiation, and their other Doctrines consequent thereon; nor can I think any Englishman to be totally ignorant, how warm Contests we have had in this Nation about the *divine Right of Bishops, &c.*; so warm, that 'till now not a single Person has ever thought the contending Parties to be wholly *disinterested*, and not apprehensive

five of some *good* or *harm* from the Fate of their Principles.

But there are other Opinions here mentioned, such as *Predestination*, *Trinity*, *Incarnation*, *hypostatic Union*, and *infinite Satisfaction*; are these fit for any thing but Speculation; or can any *Good* or *Evil* be made of them, whether *believed* or not?

I answer in the Affirmative; because these Questions do all plainly arise out of *God's Word*; and because I verily believe nothing that is there found is *useless*, if we have right Conceptions of it: And if it be of *Use* to have *right* Conceptions of Matters spoken of by the divine Spirit; I think it may be infer'd that *Mistakes* therein are of *Disuse* and Detriment.

But, ask the *Remonstrants*, why they so zealously labour to beat Men out of the Belief of *Predestination*: They will tell you it is a Matter not merely *indifferent*; but that it is a Doctrine that derogates from the divine Justice and Goodness; that represents God as the *Author of Sin*, and as a Tyrant who *decrees* Men first to be guilty, and then to be punished; that it is also a Notion that hardens Men's Hearts; makes them bitter and censorious towards their fellow Christians; careless of the Conduct of their Lives and Actions, and resolute and desperate, in the most hazardous Attempts.

The Orthodox (as you call us) will demonstrate to you (if you ever read them), that it is impossible to give the Persons of the sacred *Trinity* their just Honour, either in Word or Worship, unless you justly conceive of their *Dignity*: And you cannot be ignorant that our modern *Arians* do excuse themselves for the Disturbance they have raised, and the Blasphemy they have caused by saying, the *Error* the World is in, about the Equality of *the Son*, is dangerous, and no less than *Ido-*

latry it self; and that they are bound in Charity to deliver Men from it.

The *Incarnation* of Christ, the *substantial Union* of the divine and human Nature, as well as the *infinite Satisfaction* the Messias made for the Sins of all such as shall believe and repent; are Doctrines (how light soever in your Balance) that fill every serious Breast with Admiration of God's Power and Goodness; with the most grateful Sense of the inestimable *Price*, that was paid for our Redemption; with the most ardent Love for that sacred *Person*, that did so much for us of his *free Grace* and Mercy; and with the utmost Detestation of those Sins, and Corruptions, for which he so much suffered. What then is that Heart made of, that can call these Reflections *useless Speculations*, and *idle Dreams*? How unworthy a Return do we make for such stupendous *Acts of Mercy*, when we talk of them with Contempt and Ridicule? How little have we deserved——? But lest I should grow zealous and offend, I stop short and proceed to your next Words.

“ This is a Religion every Way worthy of its
 “ eternal Author; and we may know by the Doc-
 “ trine that it comes from God. It is a Religion
 “ for Men of Sense, for Philosophers, for honest
 “ Men; and comprehensible too by the meanest
 “ Vulgar without a Guide; a Religion of Rea-
 “ son, free from the blind Mazes, and studied In-
 “ tricacies of Popish Priests, and beneficial to So-
 “ ciety at first View. It despises apish Gestures,
 “ and external Buffoonry; and effectually pre-
 “ vents, and puts an End to all inhuman Fierce-
 “ ness and holy Squabbles, ever occasioned by the
 “ selfish Religions of corrupt Priests. It leaves
 “ not unhappy Men in perpetual Doubts and An-
 “ xieties, nor tosses and tumbles them for Relief,

“ out

“ out of one Superstition into another, but esteems
 “ them all alike.

“ In short, this is a Religion which every wise
 “ and honest Man would wish to be Religion; a
 “ Religion of Charity, the Religion of Jesus;
 “ and this is the Independent Whig's Religion.
 “ *Finis.*

This is to serve as an Epilogue to the Play;
 where the Reader's Applause and Admiration is
 bespoke, and demanded, in most eloquent Phrase,
 and *Fustian past all mortal matching!* But what is
 the Argument, or Edification, contained in it;
 to whom these gaudy Trappings belong, or whom
 they will fit, requires an Examination something
 more particular.

“ This is a Religion every Way worthy of its
 “ eternal Author, and we may know by the Doc-
 “ trine that it comes from God.

These Words sound well, and are only a modest
 and laudable Recommendation of those *Wares* you
 have to dispose of: And no less has been said of
 diverse others, who have gone before you in the
 Art of *Reformation*; by *Arius* and *Socinus*; by
Leiden, *Munster*, and *Toland*; by *Adam Pastor*,
James Nailor, and the *Cobler of Gloucester*: But
 whose Scheme of Religion has the best Title to
 such lofty Encomiums, I must leave to the Fra-
 ternity to dispute among themselves.

I am afraid very few, that have considered the
Religion of the *Independent Whig*, will vote that
 worthy of this pompous *Inscription*. A Religion
 it is, as you are pleased to call it; but without
Priests or *Sabbaths*, *Ceremony* or *Service*; a Reli-
 gion that has but *one Article* to be believed, and a
 Pair of Commandments to be obeyed—: And
 even if this little be too great a *Burden*, you have,
 out of your extraordinary Philanthropy, annexed
 to it an *Act of Toleration*, for the Ease of tender
 Consci-

Consciences; and on Condition your Disciples will but observe your second Commandment, (that of feeding the hungry, &c.) the first, and all the whole Article of Faith, may be dispensed with. This is nakedly without Gloss, or wresting your whole System; the Reader has seen it again and again in your own Words; and without farther Remark on it, I leave him to judge how well it is worthy of an *eternal Author*, and how far God, or his *Grace*, is concerned in bringing it to Light.

“ It’s a Religion for Men of Sense, for Philosophers, for honest Men, and comprehensible “ too by the meanest Vulgar without a Guide.

I find you are not such an Enemy to *Mystery*, but you can at last afford us one *Paradox*! *A Religion for Philosophers, and yet comprehensible by the meanest Vulgar*! I beg to know what is your Definition of the Term *Philosopher*; and what are the Affections, Inclinations, Abilities, Ways of Life or Thinking, that intitle a Man to that Character? And what is there so peculiar in this your one Article, that so exactly suits both with the Genius of *such Persons*, and with the *meanest Vulgar*?

You, perhaps, may have found out a *new sort* of Philosophers, with Capacities adapted to your *new Creed*; but those, who antiently had that Denomination, were *Lovers of Wisdom*, Searchers after Truth, with Minds bent on useful Discoveries, labouring to unravel the hidden Things of Nature or Providence; to give Solutions of those Phenomena that to the *Vulgar* were wonderful and unaccountable; to expound Problems; to reconcile seeming Contradictions; to acquire *Knowledge* to themselves, and to impart it to the World. How then is this *single Article* to be so managed, improved, or extended, as to find Work for such curious Heads? Are we to understand it in this Place
in

in the largest Sense; and is it fit for Philosophers, because it contains infinite Wisdom, and opens a Way to study and expound the whole *Covenant of Grace*? This I could find in my Heart to grant you; but then how can we think it at the same Time *comprehensible by the meanest Vulgar*?

The meanest Vulgar! I could not have thought it! You certainly keep very learned Company; or else you must have suspected, that some few at least have not Brains, or Opportunities, to *comprehend* even this *one Article*. But though your Friends are all such *Divines*, so studious, and philosophical; yet have you no Tenants, nor Servants (do you think) that may need a little Instruction on this Point? I grant you they are able to pronounce the Words with very little prompting! But I remember you told us, that *believing* is a thing clear different from *repeating*; that no Man can be said to believe what he does not understand——that we must understand the Meaning of every Term in a Proposition, before we can so much as assent to it——. Can you then affirm of every Member of your own Family (the meanest of which may and ought to know far more than the *meanest Vulgar*), that they have *suitable Ideas* of every Term in this their own Master's *Article*; that they do truly comprehend it; or that they are *able* so to do without better Guidance?

I need not use more Words to shew the Absurdity of this strange Paradox: Your own Words (you see plainly) most effectually expose it; and indeed 'tis very seldom I am obliged to go farther for an Answer to any thing you advance against Religion: I cannot help owning you so far a Friend to Truth, and to the Gospel, that whatever you have Occasion to say against them in one Place, 'tis a hundred to one but first or last you confute it in another.

“ With-

“ Without a Guide.

We are at last come to the Aim and *End* of all this mighty Struggle ! Without a Guide—— ? This is the Sting of the whole Satire ; the *Application* of all the elaborate Discourse !

You must know, courteous Reader, *We would fain get rid of, or at least humble and mortify these troublesome Parsons*——. And how should this be done but by disgracing them and their Office, and representing them to the People, as *useless, burdensome*, and mischievous a Gang, as Wit, Words, and Malice can paint them ? Dirt is therefore every Way raked together, to cast at their Persons, their Morals, and even their Breeding. All the old Stories are pickt up, vampt, and improved ; new ones are very ingeniously forged ; and all of them told with such a peculiar Air and Art, that they may look like the Characters of the *Priests* in general, that such Vices may seem essential to the whole Order ; and that every young apish *Whigling*, who has but just Learning enough to read the Tale, may laugh aloud, nod his Head, and then put on a grave Face, and swear *they will all do the same*.

However, as there is not a Man of the least Knowledge or Reflection, but is acquainted with diverse of the Clergy, who are direct Confutations of these Calumnies, other Aids must come in. The People are therefore kindly put in Mind how much annually we cost them, and what *Fleets, Armies, or Courts* they might maintain with the Revenue that's foolishly thrown away on these scurvy Parsons : And lest some plain honest Christian should reply, that Religion is a Matter of great Weight and Importance, and that Men's *Souls* are of more value than *Fleets*, &c. your next Aim is to convince them that we are by no Means *necessary* to the Christian Religion, nor of any Service

vice in it; but on the contrary an *Obstacle to Truth*, and an Impediment to Virtue and *true Piety*. To clear this Point you inform your Readers, that *Priests are all laid aside by the Gospel*; and if it were not so, yet that the present Clergy are the most unqualified for preaching it of any Set of Men in the World: And to finish the Piece, you affirm there is nothing in all Christianity, that has the least *need* of Teachers or Expositors; that it is *comprehensible by the meanest Vulgar without a Guide*.

“ Alas, good People, (whatever these Priests
 “ would make you believe) the Religion of Je-
 “ sus, and of the Independent Whig, is the most
 “ plain, philosophical, home-spun, sublime Reli-
 “ gion in the World! It is no more than what the
 “ Light of Nature discovers to every Sailor, Dray-
 “ man, and Shoe-blacker! It is, I confess, a Re-
 “ ligion of Reason, worthy its eternal Author,
 “ and one may know by the Doctrine that it comes
 “ from God: But yet it is no more than one might
 “ have known without God’s Assistance; it is
 “ what the *meanest Vulgar* might discover and
 “ comprehend, without the Trouble of Revelati-
 “ on from Heaven, or any Guide upon Earth.

Thus far your Benevolence to Mankind has prevailed on you to discover unto them; and if they are such Asses, such Dolts, and Blockheads, as not to make the natural Inferences, let them go on to be Priest-ridden.

I shall leave every Reader to make his own Remarks and Reflections, on these your charitable Undertakings; and I hope he will consider with due Gratitude, how much himself and his Country is obliged to you for these happy Discoveries. Only to assist his Meditations on this Subject, I beg Leave to lay before him these following Positions.

1. That

1. That the Christian Religion is of great Use and Advantage to any Society of Men, that generally imbraces and conforms to it.

2. That in Order to its being thus generally imbraced and followed, there is a Necessity of such publick Officers, as are called Guides, Priests, or Teachers.

3. That such Officers are not only necessary in the Theory, but in Fact they are the Ordinance and Institution of God himself in the New Testament.

4. That the Persons established for that publick Office by the Christian Society or Church of *England*, are, as to their Office and Establishment, agreeable to the said Institution of God.

5. That in general, and considered as a Body, they do worthily discharge their publick Office, and fulfil the Ends of their said Institution and Establishment. And therefore,

6. That it will be for the Good and Benefit of this our *English* Society to support and maintain this happy *Establishment*.

Position 1. It would be rude and impertinent in me to enter into a strict and formal Proof of the first Position; because (as I suppose) I am writing to a Gentleman and a Scholar, and one that professes himself a Christian. After I have seen you quoting, talking of, and appealing to the New Testament, as the Word of God; after you have asserted the Belief of the Messias as a *necessary Article of Faith*; after you have said the finest Things in the World of the Gospel of Christ, and particularly described it as a *pure and perfect Law, a spiritual, innocent, and undefiled Religion, a Religion free from Idolatry and Superstition, and intended to make Men wiser and better*; I say, after all these fine Speeches and orthodox Confessions, to doubt of your Faith, or to suppose you have any other

than the highest Opinion of the Christian Religion, would be an intolerable Breach of Charity and good Manners, and a robbing you of that Virtue, on which you so much depend, the Virtue of *Sincerity*.

Nor ought I to suspect of any other Person, that shall read this Controversy, that he is either so ignorant, as not to know that Virtue and Morality, Justice and Charity, Truth and Sincerity, Temperance and Sobriety, Patience and Constancy, Piety towards our Maker, Love to our fellow Creatures, and a good Government of our selves, are the Precepts and the Effects of the Christian Religion; or that he is so abandon'd as to deny their Usefulness, and Advantage to that Society, who shall generally embrace and conform themselves to them. Wherefore

Position 2. In order to this Religion's being thus generally embraced, and followed; there is a *Necessity of such publick Officers*, as are called *Guides*, *Priests*, or *Teachers*. I here use these several Words, to prevent all Ambiguity, and Equivocation! You will give me Leave to take Notice, that in this Place (the Close of your Book) you venture so far as to say, *without a Guide*; because by this Time you have so dress'd up your Religion, as not to need any Officer of that Kind: I presume also you will permit me to guess, why in other Parts of your Book (when you would have it believed, that such *publick Officers* are contrary to the Nature of the *Gospel*), you rather choose to make use of the Word *Priest*; a Word that may properly enough (on Occasion) be so defined, as not to be the Character of any Person *instituted* by the *Gospel*. But for my Part, I am willing to have the Question stated with all imaginable Clearness; and would (if possible) express my self so, that neither Ignorance,

rance; nor Malice, could wrest my Words to more than one Meaning.

I say then, (by your Leave) that there is a Necessity of such *publick Officers*, (call them *Priests*, *Guides*, *Teachers*, or what you please) such Officers as shall undertake to teach, guide, and instruct the Society, in the Principles of the Christian Religion; as well as minister for them in the *Ordinances* of Worship. In so saying I am not only supported by the *Light* of Reason, by the Consent and Suffrage of every Nation, every Sect or Party (not excepting the very Quakers), and by long and constant Experience, (which has always immediately discovered the Inconvenience, as soon as ever such Officers have been in any Place wanting, or else deficient in their Duty); but to my great Comfort, even you your self have declared clearly and fully on my Side. This gracious Testimony to us, and to the Truth, is in your fourth Paper, in the following Words.

“ It is the farthest from my Thoughts, by any thing I have before said, to undervalue their true Office, much less to make it useless. I sincerely think it *absolutely necessary* to the Peace and Happiness of Society.

And a little after you are pleased to inform us, that the Ends of our Institution are,

“ To press the reading the Scriptures upon our Hearers; to shew their Excellency and Advantages; to inculcate the plain Precepts of Faith and Morality; to demonstrate the Goodness of God to Men, by proving that he has laid down to us in plain Words, every Duty which he requires of us, either to himself, our Neighbours, or our selves.

Thus you acknowledge, in the most express Terms, that such *publick Officers* are of ABSOLUTE NECESSITY to the Peace and Happiness of Society (which

(which are the main temporal Ends of the Christian Religion); and so much Work you appropriate to us afterwards, as fully demonstrates us to be so. For as it is of absolute Necessity, that Men be prest and exhorted to *read the Scriptures*; that they be shewn, and convinced of, their *Excellency* and *Advantages*; that the noble Precepts contained in them be urged and inculcated on Mankind; that the Goodness of Almighty God be demonstrated; that the Duties he requires of us to *Himself*, our *Neighbour*, and *ourselves*, be set forth, proved, and explained; so it is utterly impossible this Service should be duly performed, without particular Officers set apart for it, and encouraged to labour in it, with a Diligence proportionable to the Importance of the Work.

There is no Business of any considerable Weight, but there are Persons ordained either by God or Man, and approved of by both to undertake it: This is evident in the Affair of Government, in Law, and in Physick; and even the meanest Arts or Occupations, are not thought to be managed to Advantage, but when they are the Tasks of particular Persons: And therefore as *Religion* is of the greatest Moment, as it is the most important Affair we are concerned in, both as to this Life and the next, I hope no serious Person will think it unworthy of such Regard or Provision.

It is impossible a Work of any Difficulty or Danger, or that requires a strict Application, or Study, should be well performed, unless it be made the Duty and Interest of particular Men. What is left to every one without Appointment, Reward, or Encouragement, will be discharged as it ought, by few or none: And tho' we should imagine that here and there a good Parent, or a true Friend, might generously take up this Christian Office; yet such a private Charity would

operate

operate so narrowly, and on so very few; that, as to the common Good of the Society, perhaps it were better not done at all. For wherever a great Majority shall be utterly destitute of the Knowledge of God, his Will, and his Judgments; the Principles of Christianity will but expose the Residue to Contempt, Rapine, and Persecution.

I believe I may affirm, that most of the Pulpits of this Nation constantly sound with the Duties, you say are the *great Ends* of our *Institution*: The Precepts of *Morality* are as plainly set forth, as eloquently recommended, and as warmly prest on the *Congregations* of *England*, as can be done by human Wit, Learning, or Affection: And yet we see but too plainly, how obstinately we are opposed by Appetite and Interest; how hard it is for us to convince the People of the Duties of Abstinence, and Self-denial; to stir them to those Courses that are in Opposition to the World, or the Flesh; or to keep them intent and serious on those Works that have not a present Relish. What then would human Race come to, were the Services of the Clergy to be laid aside? How ignorant and barbarous would Men soon grow, were they not every Week put in Mind of him that made and governs them? How stupid, how careless, how selfish, mischievous, and brutally ravenous, would any Nation become, if they were not at frequent, and constant Seasons, warned and terrified with Death and Judgment; and roundly foretold what they are like to suffer, if they do not strive to please him, *who holds in his Hand the Breath of their Nostrils*, and who will eternally judge them?

Tis true, these Arguments are as weighty in the Mouth of any one as a Priest, and *Truth is Truth*, though in no Mouth at all: But the Question is, how it should come (without such Mouths) to
 M † the

the Peoples Ears; how they should *hear without a Preacher*; whether in such Case the *Vulgar* would not soon be without the bare Knowledge of *God in the World*; and whether their *Betters* would not find a wretched want of at least *Remembrancers* and *Admonishers*? Every wise Legislator, since the World began, has determined on our Side of the Question; by not only receiving and recommending some Religion or other to their Subjects; but by ordaining and *establishing publick Officers* (as necessary to its Being) to teach, inculcate, and minister in it. And

Position 3. Such Officers are not only necessary in Theory or Experience; but in FACT *they are the Ordinance and Institution of God himself even in the New Testament.*

For the Proof of this Position I will do my self the Honour to begin with a most notable and irrefragable Argument, for which I am (as indeed I have often been in like Cases) beholden to your self. In your 41st Chapter you introduce Mr. *Hobs* confessing that *Religion is natural to Man*; to which you are pleased, for once, to add, that

“ No History or Voyages give us an Account
“ of any Country, in any Manner civilized without Religion, as well as Priests or Ministers,
“ and Temples or Places of Worship.

This is one Testimony; and here in this last Chapter, which we have been particularly examining, we have another, where you inform us, that

“ Jesus came with divine Authority, and with
“ the Power of Miracles, to restore Men to their
“ Senses, and to Natural Religion.

Let us then put these two Sentences together! And if you will but allow the Religion of these civiliz'd Nations to be *Natural Religion*, the Consequence is evident and undeniable; that as

Priests and Temples are necessary Appurtenances to *Natural Religion*, so the *Messias* came thus impower'd and authoris'd to *restore* us to them, or to the *Use* of them.

These civilized Nations we are talking of, had no Revelation, nor any thing but the Light of *natural Reason*, to guide and direct them; and the Religion they had was the Dictates of that Reason: If therefore *Priests and Temples* were always a Part of these Dictates, and a sure Institution, wherever the People were *civilized*; we cannot choose but infer, that they were *necessary*, either towards *civilizing* these People, or else *necessary* in the Judgments of the most *civiliz'd* People; and consequently, that they were an indispensable Part of *Natural Religion*, and what our Lord came to bless us with and restore us to.

This Indulgence of yours is great; but it is too hot to hold! This favourable Testimony is all retracted in the following Chapters; where (under Colour of demolishing the usurped Powers of the Popish Priests) you suggest that there is neither Necessity nor Occasion of the Clergy, (as a separate Body) from the Nature of Christianity; you affirm in so many Words, (Chap. xlviii.) that *there is nothing in the four Gospels to authorize or countenance the Distinction of Ecclesiastical and Civil*; and you argue with as much Decency as Dexterity, that as our Lord came to *free the Church from the Jewish Priests*, so if he had established any in their Rooms he should have *expresly told us so*.

Is nothing then a Doctrine of Christianity, but what is *expresly told us* in the four Gospels? Are there not diverse Things, which it concerns a Christian both to *know* and to *do*, which are not directly pronounced by our Saviour, but presupposed, or taken for granted, or left to be *inferred* (*a fortiori*) from the rest of his Discourse? Our Lord

had no Occasion to repeat every known Precept of *Nature*, or of *Moses*; but (as he himself tells us) he came to *fulfil*, to fill up, and improve them. On this Account it is, that we see him insisting with more Words against *Malice* than *Murder*; more against *returning* an Evil, than *offering* it; for this Reason is so much said by him to excite us to *love our Enemies*, and so little for our Friends, Relations, or even Parents: On the same Grounds it is not expressly declared that we are to abstain from *Self-murder*; to have but *one Wife*; to nourish our *Offspring*; to teach them to read, or to instruct them in Religion; because these Duties are no more than we might easily learn from that divine Light, that was born in us. May we not then, on these Reflections, very safely affirm that there was no Occasion for an *express Institution* of that Order of Men, in the Christian Dispensation, which the whole World looked on before as essential to any Religion whatsoever? You tell us your self, that every *civilized Nation of the Gentiles thought them necessary*; you will never deny but the *Jews* had *Priests* and *Priestcraft* in abundance: Our Lord therefore had no need to proclaim what every body knew; but instead of that he fell immediately to correcting and improving; instead of *instituting* in a publick and formal Manner, it was more likely he would betake himself directly to *reforming*. We know he severely reprimanded such Persons for their Hypocrisy and Prophaneness, without the least Reflection on the Nature of their Office; he whipt the sordid Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple of God, and assigned to it such a Use as necessarily supposes and requires a constant Ministry, and gave his own Apostles a *Commission* so copious and extensive, as could not possibly be fulfill'd without it.

Yet you are sure and peremptory that there is *nothing in the four Gospels to countenance* the Supposition of such an Order!

Remember, I pray you, that our Lord himself *ordained* the Twelve and the Seventy! Consider the *Command* and the *Commission* he gave them, to *make Disciples, to baptize, and to teach and instruct all Nations*. Were all these Offices wholly performed, or could they be performed by the Apostles in their own Persons; or was it to be imagined that so many Millions of Souls of so different Languages, and so distant Countries, could be converted, admitted, baptized, assembled, instructed, and minister'd unto by so small a Number? But were this practicable during the Apostle's Lives, yet what was to be done afterwards? Was the Work of the Gospel immediately to drop? Were not future *Generations* as well intitled to the Benefits of the Messiah, and as much concern'd to be taught and baptized, as distant Nations? Was all Posterity to shift for themselves; and every one to stay 'till his Neighbour had Leisure and Inclination to inform him? Was there to be no Continuance of *Assemblies* for Christian Worship; or was that Worship to be performed without any *Authority* to bring them thither, or to instruct, exhort, admonish, and minister to them there? These things seem to be *necessary* towards the Exercise of Christ's Religion, and the Worship of God; and you your self have been so kind (in your 49th Paper) to own them to be so: Are they then *necessary* to Religion, and yet not a Part of Religion? Did the Messiah institute a Religion, and not institute every thing that was *necessary* to the Being of it; or did he at first institute every Thing that was necessary, and yet not ordain the Continuance of those *necessary Things*?

You

You tell us of a Time when every one who barely believed that *Jesus was the Messiah, was able to work Miracles*.—In such a golden Age one would think that *Preachers and Teachers* might have been less needful; and that the same *holy Spirit* which enabled them to perform *Signs and Wonders*, might have directed their Behaviour also: But since that these extraordinary Effusions are ceased, and Men are left to work with the ordinary Graces of Nature and Education; I cannot help thinking it much more *necessary*, that there should be an Order of Men set apart for the *Service of God and Religion*; exempt from other Trades and Cares of Life; and at Leisure to apply themselves to the Arts of Persuasion and Exhortation; to convince Men of their Duty, and prevail with them to pursue it; to *assemble* them together for the Worship of their Maker, to direct their *Behaviour*, and *minister* to them in that holy *Service*. 'Tis true, 'tis hard to prove what (as you say) *no civilized Nation has ever tried*: But it is not to be doubted, but without such a Ministry, the Knowledge of the Father, as well as the Son, would be soon forgotten; and as little to be doubted that an *Institution*, thus *necessary* to the Glory of God, is not of his own *Appointment*.

The Apostles of Christ (if they were not mistaken) were beyond all Controversy of this Opinion: For as themselves were *ordained* by their great Master, so they immediately *ordained* others, and gave those others Rules and Directions to ordain others still. This is as plain as a Demonstration in all their Writings; and were it not so, Custom and Tradition would assure us of it. For were not Men under the most insuperable Prejudices, or something worse, they could never imagine, that a Set of *usurping* Clergy could at once pop into the World, and no body so much as take

Notice of it; that they could be *universally received* through the whole Church, had they not been received from the very Birth of Christianity, from the Directions of the Apostles, and their blessed Master.

I confess, had I never heard of a *Bishop*, or *Presbyter*, 'till the Days of *Constantine*, I should have been tempted to suspect something of their Pretences; but when I observe (with you) that the chief Advantage the Clergy could expect in those early Days, was to be tortur'd more, or hang'd higher; when they well foreknew, that they were to get nothing in this World, but *Pluralities of Stripes*; that the grand *Precedence* their Function gave them, was to the *Stake* or to the *Cross*; I say, these Observations abundantly convince me, that the first *Successors* of the Apostles had no worldly *Craft* to incite them to usurp such *Offices and Dignities*; I cannot doubt but they took them as the Institution of God himself, and looked upon them as *necessary* to the *Ends* of the Christian Dispensation.

And had the Church continued in those Circumstances, you had never envy'd us our Preferments, or our Titles——! But Prosperity (as is too common) has been our Ruin——! 'Tis this has raised us Enemies without, and Hypocrites among ourselves! This is indeed the Nature of things; Adversity is the best Guard against Pride and Wantonness; and nothing is more certain, than that Wealth and Power are never misused before they are obtained!

However, I hope that worldly Felicity does not actually suspend us from officiating as Ministers of Christ; and that Bonds and Imprisonments are not essential to our Coat of Function. I would be loth to think a *Bishop* of our Church is the less a *Bishop*, for that he is also by our Civil Constitution

tution a *Lord in Parliament*; nor can I see any Reason in the World to suggest, that the Powers of *preaching, ordaining, and administering the Sacraments*, which were held by those who succeeded the Apostles, are not derived to their Successors, through all Ages, Circumstances, and Accidents.

This puts me in Mind of the Mirth you are pleased to make your self with the Word *Succession*, UNINTERRUPTED SUCCESSION! (Chap. 7.) I am not concerned with every high-flown Expression, that may have dropt from such Men as Dr. *Hickes*, or *Lessly*; nor shall I inquire how far you are mistaken in their Notions, or inconsistent with your own, on these Subjects: But this I must say, and beg Leave to persist in, that as Christ at first instituted an *Order of Men*, to labour in the Gospel; and as such an Order is no less necessary, towards the *Ends* of the Gospel, in all succeeding Ages, than it was in the Beginning; I say, on these Grounds I must presume that God *willeth* the Continuance of this Order, as long as he *willeth* the Continuance of that Religion, which cannot subsist without it.

This proves our SUCCESSION *de jure*, and that it has *de facto* continued, no body that understands the Question will venture to deny. By SUCCESSION I do not mean that all who derive their Office from the Apostles, should equal them in Power; nor is there the least Occasion to assert, that no Link in the Chain has or may be broken, nor shall I be so rash as to hazard my Salvation, or my Title to Christianity, by founding them on the strict Observation of those things, which, for aught any one can tell, may have been sometimes omitted: Tho' had we a Mind to be stiff or disputatious, I might challenge you to shew the *Omission*; and to point out to us the Time and Place of such *Interruption*.

But

But these are needless and useless Questions: The Almighty made us, and best knows our Frailty and Fallibility; he prescribes unto us general *Rules* to walk by; and where we miss of them by Impossibility, unavoidable Accident, or invincible Ignorance; there is infinite *Merit*, and infinite *Mercy*, to supply the Defect.

But still, as far as in us lies, are we to proceed according to God's Ordinances. We are not willingly to go beyond the Pale, he is pleased to appoint us; nor saucily to conclude a *Rule* of his, that is not in all Cases exactly, infallibly, and perfectly to be kept, is therefore to be *derided*.

I should think I had good Reason to refuse the Sacraments from the Hands of one whose *Orders were forged*; our *Church* admits not into holy Orders one that was never baptized, an Atheist, or Infidel; yet either of these Cases may unwittingly happen; and I question not but the *Ordinance* it self (tho' in unworthy Hands) would have its due Effect on *worthy Partakers*.

I have no Occasion in this Place to contend, that this *Successorship*, or this Power of ordaining, is only in *Bishops*, or in single Persons. The Dispute betwixt you and me, is not about the Extent of the Office, nor in whose Hands this *Succession* remains; but only whether there be such a *standing Office*, such a *Succession* in general, according to the Nature of the Gospel Dispensation.

Every Book and almost Chapter of the Epistles, is directly, or indirectly, an Affirmation of this Question. I thought once to have transcribed the remarkable Texts to this Purpose, but it is a Work as needless as it is endless. It is an Affront to the Reader to suppose him so ignorant of the Book of his Salvation, as to need Quotations for so plain a Matter: I therefore refer him to all those known Places, where *Stewards*, *Ambassadors*,

bassadors, Preachers, Apostles, Guides, Ministers, Bishops, Overseers, Rulers, Elders, &c. are discouraged of: Or lest you should think I slight your *Authorities* on this Argument, I only desire him to turn his Bible to those *very Texts* you are so happy as to produce against us in your 49th Paper. Let him read and consider them, together with their Contents (naked as they are, without any Gloss or Comment of mine), and let him then make his Judgment, and give a direct Answer to these plain Questions.

Whether the Religion of Christ can be propagated and performed, without a constant *Succession* of Preachers, Teachers, or Ministers?

Whether such an Office and Succession are not necessarily imply'd and instituted in the New Testament?

Whether they who by God's Appointment are the Ministers of his Word, are not also the proper Ministers of his Sacraments?

Position 4. My next Position is, that *the Persons established for this publick Office by the Christian Society, or Church of England, are, as to their Office and Establishment, agreeable to the said Institution of God.*

I might fairly insist that the *onus probandi*, is in this Place upon the Objector. I have proved that this Office is *necessary* to Religion, and that it is the Ordinance of God: And by immemorial Custom and Consent of Parties, we are in Possession of that Office. The labouring Oar is therefore upon you to dispossess us; to shew that we, of this particular Church, are not intitled to it, or qualified for it; to make appear, that the *Institution* is meant of other Persons, under other *Titles, Characters, or Forms* of Admission.

But what Objection is it you can or will venture to make against us? Methinks the bare *Words*, or
Names,

Names, of *Bishop, Presbyter, &c.* should be beneath the Cavil of one who cannot be ignorant that *Sounds* are arbitrary and mutable; that Letters or Syllables can have no Guilt in them; but that all Offence must arise from the *Ideas* annexed to them——! Yet you are mightily diverted that in a certain Text the Word *Επίσκοπος* is *unluckily translated Overseer!* Would then our Hierarchy become perfectly lawful, if the Governors of each Diocese (instead of Bishops) were called *Overseers*? I am such a Friend to *tender Consciences*, that, by my Consent, you should have a particular *Act of Toleration* to call them so, or by any other decent Appellation; on Condition you would cease to molest them in their *Office* and *Jurisdiction*.

If you have any thing to say against particular Persons, your Objections ought in Justice to be particular; and (whatever your Practice has been in this Book) I cannot believe you will undertake to justify charging the Faults of single Members on a whole Society. I am certain the Society of the Church of *England* does not *partake of their Guilt*; either by a Defence of their Crimes, or a Disregard to the Characters of those to be admitted into *holy Orders*. As on one Side she requires a solid Testimony of Probity of Life, Gravity of Years, Steadfastness of Faith, together with Learning natural and acquir'd; so on the other Side, she has provided *Suspensions*, and *Deprivations*, for those who are immoral or negligent of their Duty; besides the legal *Fines* or *Pains* that are in common to the Clergy with their fellow Subjects.

Is the Objection then against our Pretences to *Ordination*, and our *Forms of Admission*; and doth the Grief lie in the Privilege claimed and exercised by the Clergy of *consecrating Successors*? If this be all, I desire to know who ever did exercise this Power,

Power, or who by the Nature of the Christian Covenant (which is not supposed to have always the Civil Government on its Side) can exercise it, but the *Clergy* themselves? Not to mention that they may be well supposed to be the best Judges of *Principles*, *Abilities*, &c. I would only be satisfied how this necessary Office of *Ordination* could be discharged but by the Apostles, and their Successors, in the Primitive Times (before the People were converted, or the Magistrates reconciled to them); or how we since came to survive, or forfeit this *Branch* of our *Function*?

However, we of the Church of *England* need not enter into any Controversy either with the Civil Magistrate, or with the People, for whatever Prerogative, or Privilege, can be pretended on either Side; it is by our very Constitution (which is become ONE, both Ecclesiastical and Civil) delivered into our Hands. So that by this it plainly appears, that the Orders of our Church are still *de jure*, whether Divine, or Human; that directly or indirectly we must needs be the *Ordinants of God*. If the Power of *Ordination* be by divine Right in the *Clergy*, then are the Orders we have received *directly* divine: If it was God's Will that the *Magistrate*, or *People*, should have a Share in that Power (or all of it); we are in *Possession*, in lawful Possession of that too. Again, as to the *Forms*; if *Episcopacy* and *Presbytery* (just as we understand the Words) be *jure divino*, we have then all that even *High-Church* can demand: If only the Office in general (as Ministers, Teachers, &c.) be *jure divino*, (which is the least we have proved) but the particular Titles, Distinctions, and Methods of exercising that Office, be left to every *regular Society* to determine; yet even so (our *Society* in *England* having legally and regularly determined for us) we are in general still of God's Appointment.

This

This way of arguing has been urged, and admitted, as fair and reasonable as to Civil Government; and has had the Honour to decide a very weighty and deadly Controversy in *Politicks*: And therefore, I hope, will deserve some Attention in the Case before us.

The fierce Contentions about the proper Objects of *Passive Obedience*, and whether Kings be the *Ordinance of God or Man*, have of late sunk in this just Issue. Government in general cannot be deny'd to be *jure divino*, or as St. Paul styles it, the *Ordinance of God*; the particular Forms of administering that sacred and necessary Office are left to every *Civil Society* to determine for themselves, which Determination is therefore termed by St. Peter, the *Ordinance of Man*: But when this *Ordinance* is thus constituted by Man, it then becomes *God's*; we are to submit to it *for his sake*, and on pain of *Damnation*.

You must pardon me, if I say, the Parallel will run the whole Length, even on Whiggish Principles; and (if I mistake you not) by your own Concessions, when this Reasoning is apply'd to *spiritual Guides, Teachers, &c.*

The Office in general, by the two Lights of *Nature and Revelation*, is the *Ordinance of God*: Wherefore though the particular *Forms and Methods* of exercising that Office, as well as the *Designation* of the Persons (which still I neither assert nor admit, but only to confute Men by their own Principles) should be *left to Men*; yet when once that *Form* is assented to, and settled, and the *Designation* made, these Officers are still under the Protection of God's *general Ordinance*; they are truly and properly *jure divino*; and whoever opposes, molests, or discourages them, in the Execution of their Office, incurs the Displeasure of their

their Almighty Master, whose Commission they bear. I come therefore to my

Position 5. That the Clergy of this Church thus constituted, and thus established, do in general, and considered as a Body, fulfil the great Ends of their Institution and Establishment.

This Position (how barbarous soever you have been in your Insinuations to the contrary) is so notoriously true, that no Person who hears our Sermons, can read our Discourses on religious Subjects, or that observes any thing of our Conversations, can be ignorant of it.

I am sorry to say any thing on an Argument that so much relates to my self; but I am obliged to do Justice to a Society that have been injur'd beyond Example. After all you have said, I could almost appeal to your own self, as a Gentleman and a Christian; whether the generality of the *English* Clergy are not innocent and ignorant of those villanous Designs you would charge upon them; whether they do not fulfil the very *Ends* your self have assigned to their *Institution*; whether their pious Industry in admonishing Offenders, visiting the Sick, comforting the Distressed, relieving the Poor, instructing of Youth, and propagating Christian Knowledge, is not famous through the World; and whether Virtue and Morality, Justice and Charity, Temperance and Sobriety, Fidelity, Loyalty, and Sincerity, are not constantly urged in our Pulpits, and recommended in our Lives.

On the other Side, look to the enormous Vices that are such a horrid Infamy to this degenerate Age! Observe the lewd Examples of Masquerading, Revelling, and Gaming; mark but those Lips, from whence flow such a Torrent of Blasphemy and Prophaneness; take Notice of the *Colour* of those Coats that are so stained with Uncleaness; and the Metal of those Fronts that take
Pleasure

Pleasure in justifying such Scenes of Lewdness; inquire of the Watch, what rate of Men are so often found in the Streets, or at Brothels, buried in Drunkenness, or engaged in Brawls, Rapes, or Duels; do but open your Ears to the *Complainings* in our Streets, of Assault and Robbery, of *babbling* and *deceiving*, of undermining and betraying, of Bribery and Corruption, Lying, False-witness, and Breach of Trust; and after all this Inquiry give a fair Report who are the Authors of these astonishing Crimes; whose Friends they are; what *Livery* they put on: And tell us also who those are that do their utmost to oppose and discountenance such abominable Practices, and how small Thanks they have often for their Pains.

I would not pretend that there is no Clergyman obnoxious to any of these Charges; nor is it possible to conceive, but some Knaves and *Hypocrites* will strive to get into every Employment, where they are sure to meet with both Honour and Profit: But this I may assert, that as Laws are provided for the Punishment of such base Intruders; 'tis great Pity but they were discovered, and duly prosecuted; and as great Pity, that their Villanies should be imputed to their *innocent Brethren*.

Yet this is the Way! Men are angry with us for giving them Advice, that they have not Resolution enough to follow; they bear us a Grudge for striving to rob them of their beloved Pleasures, and their darling Vices; and so (to be even with us) whenever the least Piece of Scandal can be got, or but invented against any of the Cloth, the whole Tribe must bear the *Infamy*.

However, I must own (to do you Justice, and our selves too) that your Treasures of Calumny are raked together, for the most Part, from foreign Countries, and long past Ages: But at the same Time, have you not artfully dress your Accusations

ons in modern Phrase and Stile, and drawn the Pictures in such Habits, that the heedless Beholder may not fail to take them for the Men of his *own Church*, and his *own Generation*?

But how easy, and how unworthy of a great Genius is the Business of Calumny? One may write the Story of a *Messaline*, or a *Radigand*, and pretend it is the Character of *Woman* in general! An Author of your Wit, and endless Magazine of Words and Phrases, may write a *Satire* on any thing upon Earth: But then as such a Work is but a Piece of meer *Poetry*, you should have done it in *Verse*——It might then have been concluded, that you were only in Jest; and that you had an Itch to try the Fruitfulness of your Fancy, by the Barrenness of your Subject. But as your Satire against the established Church, and its Ministers, is all in *Prose*, with an Air of Seriousness and a Pretence of Truth; I shall only say, I pray your Reader to examine it with *Justice*, and your Maker with *Mercy*.

To conclude this Argument, I appeal to every *Englishman* of Sense and Sobriety, whether the writings, and preachings, of our Churchmen, be not sufficient to reform this Nation, or to make it inexcusable in its Corruptions; whether the Word of God be not diligently, and constantly read, and explained; whether the Duties of Piety, and Morality, be not zealously recommended; whether Justice and Equity, brotherly Love, and Charity, Sincerity, Courtesy, and every civil and social Virtue, be not clearly set forth, and passionately urged; whether our Duties to our God, our *Neighbours*, and *ourselves*, be not proved and prest; and consequently whether these the *main Ends* of Religion, and our *own Institution*, be not on our Part very worthily promoted. Wherefore I come now with Confidence to the Conclusion of the whole Matter.

Position 6. That it is therefore for the good of this our English Society, to support and preserve this happy Establishment.

This, I say, is the just Conclusion from the whole; the natural and necessary Consequence of the Premises: It proves it self, it is obvious, and manifest, at the first View; and needs no Words to inforce, or demonstrate it. If the Christian Religion be of Use and Advantage to the People of this Nation together associated; and if the *Clergy established*, be agreeable to that Religion, necessary to its Being, and *useful in promoting* the good Ends thereof; it undeniably follows, that the *Benefit* is great which the said Society receives from the said *Clergy*; and that therefore they are to be *supported, maintained, and encouraged*, with a Concern proportionable to the Service they do.

Could I suppose that you would trouble your self to write an Answer to these just Apologies, I might expect to be told that all this is the Product of *Priestcraft*, and *Selfishness*; and that no Regard is to be had to Persons pleading their own Cause, and for their own Interest:—

I can boldly reply; the Word *Interest* I scorn, as often as it stands in my Way to *Truth*; if not, you should consider that I am not giving *Evidence*, but *Argument*; I am not asserting, but proving; and *Reason* is the same, whatsoever Hand it comes from.

But after all; pray where is the extraordinary Interest, we of the *Clergy* have in Religion more than other Men? I can see no Reason but we might have lived as well as we do now, could Society have subsisted without any Religion. 'Tis true, we have a Maintenance by our Employment; but I hope you will consider that a chargeable Education is contributed towards it; that our Time and Labour are bestowed upon it, and that our Application

cation to this *Function* takes us from others, that might be altogether as *profitable* to us. The same *Money, Time, Parts, or Learning*, that are bestowed towards getting a Provision in this Way, would in all probability, make no less a Progress in many others; and 'tis not to be questioned but every Member of our whole Body, one with another, might have lived as plentifully, and laid by as much as we do now, had our Fathers put us to Trade or Merchandize, to Law or Physick, or had we laid out our Talents and our Fortunes in *Party scribbling*, or in procuring Places *Civil or Military*.

Yet the People are told, with a very grave Brow, how much *annually* we cost them. But 'tis astonishing to me, that you can keep your Countenance when you thus bamboozle them.

For do you not well know, that these Clergy you talk of are *Members of the Society*, and a Part of the People? Have you not often told us, that there is *no Distinction betwixt Ecclesiastical and Civil*; can you be insensible that the Money, in the Pocket of a Clergyman, is the *Money of the Nation*; that we are Subjects of *England*, as well as the Laity; that we employ the Poor, pay Taxes, contribute to Commerce, in the same Proportions as any Gentleman whatever; and have we not the same legal Title to our Estates and Revenues; with this bare Difference, that we only are bound to *do something for them*?

But what a Figure would the Revenues of the Clergy make in FLEETS and ARMIES, or if employ'd in Trade? I answer directly, your Fleets and Armies would easily become potent enough to Ruin you; and as to Trade, the very Name of it would soon be forgotten, if it were not for the Labours of these very Men. Let fall Religion, and common Honesty follows of Course; without this Support Fidelity is lost, Diligence contemned, and all

mutual Trust and Commerce immediately banished. Without this Foundation, it is impossible for human Society to stand; our most solemn Contracts would be nothing but Jests, and empty Sounds; and soon should we degenerate with our boasted Honour into Beasts of Prey, each shift and plunder for himself, and so what every one would greedily catch at, no one would enjoy.

But how if such an unlucky Query should be put concerning the Revenues of Fops and Fiddlers, Scoffers and Cynicks, Bubbles and Stock-Jobbers, Gamesters and Backbiters, Poets, Parasites, and pretended Patriots? How vast an Income is there shared among such; and what pretence of Service or Merit, can they make to hold or enjoy their Stores? 'Tis like, *such worthy Gentlemen as these cannot be disturbed in their Possessions, without Breach of the Laws, and Invasion of Property*——! And is not the same with greater Strength to be said of the Clergy? Are not the People of *England* one Body, or Society, both *Civil* and *Ecclesiastick*; are not our Laws, as to each of these Characters, interwoven and centering in the same *Head*; or can you your self, as dexterous as you are at the Art of demolishing, contrive any Method of subverting a Part without Violation of the whole?

Our Establishment is the Work of many Ages; cheaply purchased with Seas of Blood, and Mountains of Treasures. It is wisely contrived for the common Good of all Orders and Degrees of Men among us; for the Honour of the Prince, and the Liberty of the Subject; for the due Encouragement of Diligence in the Preacher, Attention in the Hearer, and the Peace of all; for the Freedom of Conscience, and universal Benevolence; for impartial Justice, and unfeigned Charity; together with Industry, Temperance, and every Virtue, that may conduce to publick Prosperity: But above all,

all, 'tis calculated for the Preservation o Religion in its native Purity, for the happy Defence of *Truth* and Innocence, the *Favour* of God, and the Salvation of Souls. Whosoever therefore be that unhappy Author, that endeavours to libel, to unfettle or to render odious this precious Establishment, I am sorry I can conclude no better of him than that he must needs be either *insincere* in his Professions of *Love* to his Country, or else *mistaken*, very grossly mistaken, in his Methods of shewing it.

“ A Religion of Reason, free from the blind
“ Mazes, and studied Intricacies of Popish Priests,
“ and beneficial to Society at first View. It de-
“ spises apish Gestures, and external Buffoonery;
“ and effectually prevents and puts an End to all
“ inhuman Fierceness and holy Squabbles, ever
“ occasioned by the selfish Religions of corrupt
“ Priests.

I set down these Words the second Time for the Use of the Reader; to shew him the Power of well-chosen Phrases, though without any Meaning, and to give him a Sample of making a Progress in well-tuned Syllables, when Matter fails. Here he may behold most heroical Fustian, most sublime Battology, with strong Figures, and towering Metaphors, all contrived to set him a staring, and send him away in Conviction and Admiration of he knows not what. But if he should have the Curiosity to stop and inquire into the Meaning of this romantick Jargon; if he should be so importunate as to seek for Argument or Instruction in it, all I can say is, that he had best apply to some of our modern Commentators, or Chymists, to extract it for him. — This sort of Sentences are like those (*lachrymæ vitreae*) glass Drops, with which I have seen the Children surprize their Fellows; at first Sight they are bright and glistering,

polished and poinant, but if you offer to take them in Pieces to see what's within, they immediately fly into obscure Dust and Dross, without Point or Virtue. Here comes another of them——

“ It leaves not unhappy Men in perpetual
 “ Doubts and Anxieties, nor tosses and tumbles
 “ them for Relief out of one Superstition into an-
 “ other, but esteems them all alike.

Tosses and Tumbles! Pretty Metaphors these, and pithy Allusions! Only I must confess, they are farther fetched than I am able to trace them.

But what peculiar Humour or Faculty is this of your new-nothing-Religion, not to *toss or tumble Men out of one Superstition into another*? That it is a *true-born Child*, and apt to hold every thing but it self in perfect Contempt, I could readily believe: That also (it being a *Religion of Reason*, and mighty forward of its Years) it is ready to esteem all other Religions as *Superstitions*, and all *Superstitions* alike one to another, is moreover not to be wondered at: But why it is so vain as to value it self upon keeping its Disciples implicitly to it self, on not *tossing or tumbling*, driving or sending them into other Superstitions, I cannot perceive; because it is well known, that the Religions of *Rome* and of *Constantinople* are full as careful in this particular, as *your Religion* can be.

“ In short, this is a Religion that every wise and
 “ honest Man would wish to be Religion; a Re-
 “ ligion of Charity, the Religion of Jesus; and
 “ this is the Independent Whig's Religion.

In short, I would not wish any *wise* or honest Man to say greater Things of his own Inventions than the Independent Whig; but let this pass—I shall never think that too great Praise can be attributed to the *Religion of Jesus*, nor that any *wise* or *honest* Man will desire a better. No Man in his Senses can possibly be ignorant, that the *Religion*

gion of the Gospel, the Religion of the Church of England, if sincerely imbraced, and diligently practised, must soon bring forth universal Peace, and universal Love; must totally confound as well *Prophaneness* as *Superstition*, utterly extirpate all Hatred and Bitterness, Satire and Slander; and finally render us *wise, great, good, and happy* both in this Life and the next.

But as for the Religion of the Independent Whig, the *negative Religion*, the *unarticular Faith*; if such a thing were possible, that it could be received by any Society (except that of *Morefields*); we might then soon have the Diversion to behold what they could make of it, or it of them. In the mean Time, as most of the Virtues it pretends to, consist only in Negatives; as it directly tends to leave Men careless of the Knowledge of God, his Attributes, and his Will; as it takes away the chief *Motives* and Incitements to Love and Gratitude, towards our gracious Redeemer; as it despises the Doctrines of Self-denial, Mortification, and Subjection of Lust, Appetite, and Passion; as it destroys the Use, or at least the Credit, of *Guides, Teachers, Prayers, and Churches*, and rejects the Means that are absolutely necessary towards Piety and Virtue, and every good *End*, for which the Son of God was manifest; I must leave it to the Judgment of the impartial Reader, how far it deserves such extraordinary Panegyricks; how justly it may be compared with the *Religion of Wisdom*, the *Religion of Jesus*.

These, Sir, are the chief Instances, wherein I am obliged to differ from you; and I must now leave it to you to shew, and to the World to judge, whether the Reasons I have given for such Difference, are not of some Weight and Moment. I would not have it thought, but you have diverse other Sayings and Reflection in this celebrated Vo-

lume, that I can by no Means approve or assent to: But as many of them relate to Persons and Parties, that I am not concerned with; as they are of less Importance in themselves; as they are (whether through bad Memory, good Conscience or better Information, I know not) pretty often retracted or confuted by your own Words; and especially as they are so obviously absurd, or so weakly supported, as to give me very little Suspicion of their spreading, or gaining Proselytes; I cannot think it worth my while to give them the Credit of an Answer. What Profit would it be to me, or to the World, to take Notice how impiously you ridicule and vilify *all Manner* of Humiliation and Sorrow for Sin; and then the Week after, in a short Advertisement, pretend you meant not a *godly Sorrow*? How needless is it to inquire what Countenance you wore, when you called the learned and pious Dr. *Sn—e* an Atheist, for taking up a Story (on Authorities that no Man could reasonably suspect) to the Discredit of one Divine; after your self had published the most improbable and barefaced *Forgeries*, against the whole *Order*? If *Mistake* be so criminal, what shall we say of *Malice*? If Scandal be Atheism, Lord have Mercy on the Independent Whig!

But your strange Fancies about Creeds, Establishments, Prayer, &c. I could not think to be so safely contemned.

*He nuge seria ducunt
In Mala*

These rary-fine Conceits, as merry as they may seem in your own Eyes, or ridiculous in another's, may yet happen to do great Mischief; especially when read or repeated with Emphasis before purse-proud Tradesmen, illiterate Beaus, or saucy School-Boys. For these Reasons I have taken the Liberty to examine your Notions of this Nature, without much

Cere-

Ceremony; and if your *Quality* be such as to give you pretence to greater Respect and Deference than I have paid you, you have no body to blame but your own Concealment of that *Quality* from me. Be it how it will, no Considerations of this Kind ought to prejudice the Cause of God. *Amicus Plato, amicus Socrates, sed magis amica Veritas!* I am only sorry that Men of Learning should write any thing which they were ashamed to own; that the World does not know to whom it is beholden for these rare *Illuminations*; and that the Advancer of them is not obliged (as in Honour he really is) either to retract or to defend them.

These *anonymous Authors* have the Advantage of quitting the Field of Battle as oft as they find Occasion, without leaving us any Body to triumph over. These lurking *Partizans* attack us when and where they please, and then retire into their obscure Fastnesses, grinning to behold the Surprise and Hurry they have caused in our Camp. This was the Prowess of the *Christian Rights*; though some say, the learned Author of that ingenious *Novelty*, was so warmly received, as to cast away his very Arms in his precipitate Flight, and never to have recovered the use of Pen, Ink, and Paper since. In the same manner did we lose also a more modern *Author*, being so magisterially lashed in a certain Pamphlet, supposed to be written by one Mr. Richard Bentley, that the whole Party have worshipped their Chastizer (as the *Indians* do him they are most afraid of) to this very Day.

But far be it from such a Hero as the Independent Whig, to tread these common Paths! Every body is sensible that you have all the Qualifications that render an Adversary truly formidable; and you know very well you can have nothing to fear (whilst I am your only Opponent), but naked Truth and Honesty. I may hope therefore that

that you will soon give me the Honour of a *Reply*; that you will labour to defend the Castle you have built; to support the Scheme, of which you and your Friends have so lavishly boasted; to cherish the new Lights you have so generously set up; to maintain to the World your *only Article*, your Opinions of *Mystery*, *Sincerity*, and the *Clergy*; and to demonstrate the Equity of your new Way of *expounding* the Word of God. This, I say, is what I suddenly hope and desire of you, being above all things ambitious of pushing these Points as far as they will go, and bringing the Controversy (betwixt God and *Baal*) to a fair Issue.

I expect it will be said I am not *worthy of an Answer*.——And the same have I heard diverse Times affirmed of the *Independent Whig*: But as such a lazy Evasion would not stop the Mouths of your Friends, so neither would it satisfy mine. How meanly soever I may have handled it, the *Subject* is important. And none of your Party but will forever thank you, if by a second or third Attempt you can free them from *Churches*, *Creeeds*, and *Parsons*.

My Comfort is, you have lost the old and trusty Excuse, *viz.* the *Danger of speaking ones Mind*. You have fairly confessed that there is *now no Persecution*, or Restraint *but upon High-Churchmen*, and (without Envy I speak it) the Time is at last come, that there is not the least Complaint to be made for want of *Liberty of the Press*. Oh! with what dismal Shrugs, and gloomy Brows; with what pregnant Hints, and gross Intimations, in former Days, have we been given to imagine the prodigious *Discoveries* there were to be made, could Men but write, as they think, *freely*——! That happy Hour is now come——and I exhort you in God's Name to do your best! I thank God, we have no *Mystery* (that I know of) that dreads the
Light;

Light; no Principles that would shun Examination; no Doctrines but will gain Ground by a fair Disputation. So far am I from wishing this *Liberty* taken from you, that I should heartily rejoice if more of you would make use of it. Oh! that I could see every Freethinker (as they stile themselves), every Enemy to God, to Christ, or to the Church of *England*, giving *Account of his Faith* as you have done! Oh! that I could have the Pleasure to behold the Coffee-House Harangues and Declamations in *legible Characters*! Oh! that instead of corrupting the Citizens, and debauching the Youth in private Assemblies, such *ominous Demagogues* were bound but to subscribe and publish their own *Creeds*! This generous dealing would afford us for once, a fair Field, and an equal Combat.

But how can we expect People will discover themselves, whose only Prowess consists in lying hid? This would be the way for poor Country *Curates*, to make Blockheads of *fine Gentlemen*! And by this Means every raw *Deacon* (tho' now despised and ridicul'd) would be able to demonstrate the Absurdity and the Nonsense of those Notions, which have a long Time past as *Maxims* and *Axioms*, with some of our *greatest Wits*.

But I hope better things of the *Independent Whig*; and flatter my self that as he has set out like a Man of Courage, he will not presently forsake his Post. I expect, and I beseech you, as a Gentleman and a Christian, to pursue your Point; to make good the *Charge* against us, and our Faith; or to think of Satisfaction for the egregious Injury you have done to both. Oh! Sir, it is an Affair of a most fatal and terrible Consequence, you have engaged your self in; and it becomes you well to consider with what *Conscience* you take leave of it——. You talk very much of *Christ* and his
Gospel,

Gospel, and we are inclined to think you *understand* something of the Interest of Nations. You need not be told how much the Prosperity of your native Country depends on the *Credit* of Religion, nor how much Religion it self depends on the *Credit* of the *Clergy*. Remember then the unprofitable Work you have been lately promoting. Take a better View of the *deadly Principles* you have scattered over the Earth. Examine the consistency of your baneful Doctrines with *Scripture* and good *Sense*; with the Glory of the *Creator*, and the Good of the *Creature*; and either labour a little better to *justify* or *explain* them, or else give us leave to conclude you are *honestly ashamed* of them.

I pray the divine Goodness to enlighten our *Eyes*, to soften our *Hearts*, and to subdue our *Wills*, and rest,

5 OCT 57

Sir,


Your most

humble Servant,

T. SQUIRE.



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